A

SIMPLE STORY,

IN FOUR VOLUMES,

BY

MRS. INCHBALD.

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A

SIMPLE STORY.

CHAPTER I.

NOT any event, throughout life, can arreſt the reflection of a thoughtful mind more powerfully, or leave ſo laſting an impreſſion, as that of returning to a place after a few years abſence, and obſerving an entire alteration, in reſpect to all the perſons who once formed the neighbourhood.—To find that many, who but a few years before were left in their bloom of youth and health, are dead—to

find that children left at ſchool, are married and have children of their own—that ſome, who were left in riches, are reduced to poverty — that others, who were in poverty are become rich—to find, thoſe once renowned for virtue, now deteſted for vice—roving huſbands, grown conſtant—conſtant huſbands, become rovers—the firmeſt friends, changed to the moſt implacable enemies—beauty faded.—In a word, every change to demonſtrate, that,

"All is tranſitory on this ſide the grave."

Guided by a wiſh, that the reflecting reader may experience the ſenſation, which an attention to circumſtances like theſe, muſt excite; he is deſired to imagine ſeventeen years elapſed, ſince he has ſeen or heard of any of thoſe perſons who in the foregoing volumes have been introduced

introduced to his acquaintance — and then, ſuppoſing himſelf at the period of thoſe ſeventeen years, follow the ſequel of their hiſtory.

To begin with the firſt female object of this ſtory.—The beautiful, the beloved Miſs Milner—ſhe is no longer beautiful —no longer beloved—no longer—tremble while you read it!—no longer—virtuous.

Dorriforth, the pious, the good, the tender Dorriforth, is become a hard-hearted tyrant. The compaſſionate, the feeling, the juſt Lord Elmwood, an example of implacable rigour and injuſtice.

Miſs Woodley is grown old, but leſs with years than grief.

The boy, Ruſhbrook, is become a man, and the apparent heir of Lord Elmwood's fortune; while his own daughter, his only child by his once adored Miſs Milner, he refuſes ever to ſee again, in vengeance to her mother's crimes.

The leaſt wonderful change, is, the death of Mrs. Horton. Except

Sandford, who remains much the ſame as heretofore.

We left Lady Elmwood in the laſt volume at the ſummit of human happineſs; a loving and beloved bride.—We begin this volume, and find her upon her death bed.

At

At thirty-five, her "Courſe was run" —a courſe full of perils, of hopes, of fears, of joys, and at the end, of ſorrows; all exquiſite of their kind, for exquiſite were the feelings of her ſuſceptible heart.

At the commencement of this ſtory, her father is deſcribed in the laſt moments of his life, with all his cares fixed upon her, his only child—how vain theſe cares! how vain every precaution that was taken for her welfare!—She knows, ſhe reflects upon this; and yet, impelled by that inſtinctive power which actuates a parent, Lady Elmwood on *her* dying day has no worldly thoughts, but that of the future happineſs of an only child.—To every other proſpect in her view, "Thy "will be done" is her continual exclamation; but where the miſery of her daughter preſents itſelf, the expiring peni-

nitent would there combat the will of Heaven.

To detail the progreſſion by which vice gains a predominancy in the heart, may be a uſeful leſſon; but it is one ſo little to the ſatisfaction of moſt readers, that the degrees of miſconduct by which Lady Elmwood fell, are not meant to be related here; but inſtead of picturing every occaſion of her fall, to come briefly to the events that followed.

There are, nevertheleſs, ſome articles under the former claſs, which ought not to be entirely omitted.

Lord Elmwood, after four years enjoyment of the moſt perfect happineſs that marriage could give, after becoming the father of a beautiful daughter, whom he loved with a tender-

neſs almoſt equal to his love of her mother, was under the indiſpenſible neceſſity of leaving them both for a time, in order to reſcue from the depredation of his own ſteward, his very large eſtates in the Weſt Indies. His voyage was tedious; his reſidence there, from various accidents, prolonged from time to time, till near three years had at length paſſed away.—Lady Elmwood, at firſt only unhappy, became at laſt provoked; and giving way to that irritable diſpoſition which ſhe had ſo ſeldom governed, reſolved, in ſpite of his injunctions, to divert the melancholy hours cauſed by his abſence, by mixing in the gay circles of London.

Lord Elmwood at this time, and for many months before, had been detained abroad by a ſevere and dangerous ill-

neſs, which a too cautious fear of her uneaſineſs, had prompted him to conceal; and ſhe received his frequent apologies for not returning, with a ſuſpicion and reſentment they were calculated, but not intended, to inſpire.

To violent anger, ſucceeded a degree of indifference ſtill more fatal — Lady Elmwood's heart was not formed for ſuch a ſtate—there, where all the tumultuous paſſions harboured by turns, one among them ſoon found the means to occupy all vacancies: a paſſion, commencing innocently, but terminating in guilt.—The dear object of her fondeſt, her trueſt affections, was away; and thoſe affections, painted the time ſo irkſome that was paſt; ſo weariſome, that, which was ſtill to come; that ſhe flew from the preſent tedious ſolitude, to the dangerous

dangerous ſociety of one, whoſe mind depraved by faſhionable vices, could not repay her for a moment's loſs of him, whoſe abſence he ſupplied.—Or, if the delirium gave her a moment's recompence, what were her ſufferings, her remorſe, when ſhe was awakened from the fleeting joy, by the arrival of her huſband? — How happy, how tranſporting would have been that arrival a few months before!—As it would then have been felicity unbounded, it was now — language affords no word that can deſcribe Lady Elmwood's ſenſations, on being told her Lord was arrived, and that neceſſity alone had ſo long delayed his return.

Guilty, but not hardened in her guilt, her pangs, her ſhame were the more exceſſive. She fled from the place at his approach;

approach; fled from his houſe, never again to return to a habitation where he was the maſter.—She did not, however, elope with her paramour, but eſcaped to ſhelter herſelf in the moſt dreary retreat; where ſhe partook of no one comfort from ſociety, or from life, but the ſtill unremitting friendſhip of Miſs Woodley. Even her infant daughter ſhe left behind, nor would allow herſelf the conſolation of her innocent, though reproachful ſmiles—ſhe left her in her father's houſe, that ſhe might be under his protection; parted with her, as ſhe thought, for ever, with all the agonies with which mothers part from their infant children: and yet, even a mother can ſcarce conceive how much more ſharp thoſe agonies were, on beholding—the child ſent after her, as the perpetual outcaſt of its father.

Lord

Lord Elmwood's love to his wife had been extravagant — the effect of his hate was the ſame. Beholding himſelf ſeparated from her by a barrier never to be removed, he vowed in the deep torments of his revenge, never to be reminded of her by one individual object; much leſs, by one ſo near to her as her child. To beſtow upon that child his affections, would be, he imagined, ſtill, in ſome ſort, to divide them with the mother. — Firm in his reſolution, the beautiful Matilda, was, at the age of ſix years, ſent out of her father's houſe, and received by her mother with all the tenderneſs, but with all the anguiſh, of thoſe parents, who behold their offspring viſited by the puniſhment due only to their own offences.

While

While this rigid act was executing by Lord Elmwood's agents at his command, himself was engaged in an affair of ſtill weightier importance — that of life or death:—he determined upon his own death, or the death of the man who had wounded his honour and deſtroyed his happineſs. A duel with his old antagoniſt was the reſult of this determination; nor was the Duke of Avon (who before the deceaſe of his father and eldeſt brother, was Lord Frederick Lawnly) averſe from giving him all the ſatisfaction he required.—For it was no other than he, whoſe paſſion for Lady Elmwood had ſtill ſubſiſted, and whoſe addreſs in gallantry left no means unattempted for the ſucceſs of his deſigns; —No other than he, (who, next to Lord Elmwood, had been of all her lovers, the

the moſt favoured,) to whom Lady Elmwood ſacrificed her own and her huſband's future peace, and thus gave to his vanity a prouder triumph, than if ſhe had never beſtowed her hand in marriage on another. This triumph however was but ſhort—a month only, after the return of Lord Elmwood, the Duke was called upon to anſwer for his conduct, and was left where they met, ſo defaced with ſcars, as never again to endanger the honour of a huſband. As Lord Elmwood was inexorable to all accomodation, their engagement continued for a long ſpace of time; nor could any thing but the aſſurance that his opponent was ſlain, have at laſt torn him from the field, though he himſelf was dangerouſly wounded.

Yet even during the period of his danger, while for days he lay in the continual

continual expectation of his own death, not all the entreaties of his deareſt, moſt intimate, and moſt reſpected friends, could prevail upon him to pronounce forgiveneſs of his wife, or to ſuffer them to bring his daughter to him, for his laſt bleſſing.

Lady Elmwood, who was made acquainted with the minuteſt circumſtance as it paſſed, appeared to wait the news of her huſband's deceaſe with patience; but upon her brow, and in every lineament of her face was marked, that his death was an event ſhe would not for a day ſurvive: and ſhe would have left her child an orphan, to have followed Lord Elmwood to the tomb. — She was prevented the trial; he recovered; and from the ample vengeance he had obtained upon the irreſiſtible perſon

perſon of the Duke, in a ſhort time ſeemed to regain his uſual tranquillity.

He recovered, but Lady Elmwood fell ſick and languiſhed—poſſeſſed of youth to ſtruggle with her woes, ſhe lingered on, till ten years decline brought her to that period, with which the reader is now going to be preſented.

CHAPTER II.

IN a lonely country on the borders of Scotland, a ſingle houſe by the ſide of a dreary heath, was the reſidence of the once gay, volatile Miſs Milner.—In a large gloomy apartment of this ſolitary habitation (the windows of which ſcarce rendered the light acceſſible) was laid upon her death-bed, the once lovely Lady Elmwood—pale, half ſuffocated with the loſs of breath; yet her ſenſes perfectly clear and collected, which ſerved but to ſharpen the anguiſh of dying.

In one corner of the room, by the ſide of an old faſhioned ſtool, kneels Miſs Woodley, praying moſt devoutly for

for her ſtill beloved friend, but in vain endeavouring to pray compoſedly — floods of tears pour down her furrowed cheeks, and frequent ſobs of ſorrow, break through each pious ejaculation.

Cloſe by her mother's ſide, one hand ſupporting her head, the other wiping from her face the cold dew of death behold Lady Elmwood's daughter — Lord Elmwood's daughter too—yet he far away, negligent of what either ſuffers.—Lady Elmwood turns to her often and attempts an embrace, but her feeble arms forbid, and they fall motionleſs.—The daughter perceiving theſe ineffectual efforts, has her whole face convulſed with grief: kiſſes her mother; holds her to her boſom; and hangs upon her neck, as if ſhe wiſhed to cling there, not to be parted even by the grave.

On the other ſide of the bed ſits Sandford — his hair grown white — his face wrinkled with age — his heart the ſame as ever —— The reprover, the enemy of the vain, the idle, and the wicked; but the friend and comforter of the forlorn and miſerable.

Upon thoſe features where ſarcaſm, reproach, and anger dwelt, to threaten and alarm the ſinner; mildneſs, tenderneſs, and pity beamed, to ſupport and conſole the penitent. Compaſſion changed his language, and ſoftened all thoſe harſh tones that uſed to denounce perdition.

"In the name of God," ſaid he to Lady Elmwood, "of that God, who ſuffered for you, and, ſuffering, knew and pitied all our weakneſſes—By him, who has given his word to *take compaſſion on*

on the ſinner's tears, I bid you hope for mercy.—By that innocence in which you once lived, be comforted—By the ſorrows you have known ſince your degradation, hope, that in ſome meaſure, you have atoned—By the ſincerity that ſhone upon your youthful face when I joined your hands, and thoſe thouſand virtues you have ſince given proofs of, truſt, that you were not born to die *the death of the wicked.*"

As he ſpoke theſe words of conſolation, her trembling hand claſped his—her dying eyes darted a ray of brightneſs—but her failing voice endeavoured in vain, to articulate.—At length, fixing her looks upon her daughter as their laſt dear object, ſhe was juſt underſtood to utter the word "Father."

"I underſtand you," replied Sandford, "and by all that influence I ever had over him, by my prayers, my tears," (and they flowed as he ſpoke) "I will implore him to own his child."

She could now only ſmile in thanks.

"And if I ſhould fail," continued he, "yet while I live, ſhe ſhall not want a friend or protector—all an old man, like me can anſwer for" —— here his tears interrupted him.

Lady Elmwood was ſufficiently ſenſible of his words and their import, to make a ſign as if ſhe wiſhed to embrace him: but finding her life leaving her faſt, ſhe reſerved this laſt token of love for her daughter—with a ſtruggle ſhe lifted herſelf from her pillow, clung to her child—and died in her arms.

CHAPTER III.

LORD Elmwood was by nature, and more from education, of a ſerious, thinking and philoſophic turn of mind. His religious ſtudies had completely taught him to conſider this world but as a paſſage to another; to enjoy with gratitude what Heaven in its bounty ſhould beſtow, and to bear with ſubmiſſion, whatever in its vengeance it might inflict.—In a greater degree than moſt people he practiſed this doctrine; and as ſoon as the ſhock he received from Lady Elmwood's conduct was abated, an entire calmneſs and reſignation enſued; but ſtill of that ſenſible and feeling kind, that could never ſuffer him to forget the

happineſs he had loſt; and it was this ſenſibility, which urged him to fly from its more keen recollection as much as poſſible—this, he alledged as the reaſon why he would never permit Lady Elmwood, or even her child, to be named in his hearing. But this injunction (which all his friends, and even the ſervants in the houſe who attended his perſon, had received) was, by many people, ſuſpected rather to proceed from his reſentment, than his tenderneſs; nor did he deny, that reſentment co-operated with his prudence: for prudence he called it, not to remind himſelf of happineſs he could never taſte again, and of ingratitude that might impel him to hatred: and prudence he called it, not to form another attachment near to his heart, more eſpecially ſo near as a parent's which might again expoſe him to

to all the torments of ingratitude, from an object whom he affectionately loved.

Upon theſe principles he formed the unſhaken reſolution, never to acknowledge Lady Matilda as his child—or acknowledging her as ſuch—never to ſee, to hear of, or take one concern whatever in her fate and fortune. The death of her mother appeared a favourable time, had he been ſo inclined, to have recalled this declaration which he had ſolemnly and repeatedly made—ſhe was now deſtitute of the protection of her other parent, and it became his duty, at leaſt, to provide her a guardian, if he did not chuſe to take that tender title upon himſelf. — but to mention either the mother or child to Lord Elmwood, was an equal offence, and prohibited in the

ſtrongeſt terms to all his friends and houſehold; and as he was an excellent good maſter, a ſincere friend, and a moſt generous patron, not one of his acquaintance or dependants, were hardy enough to draw upon themſelves his certain diſpleaſure, which was always violent in the extreme, by even the official intelligence of Lady Elmwood's death.

Sandford himſelf, intimidated through age, or by the auſtere, and moroſe manners which Lord Elmwood had of late years adopted; Sandford wiſhed, if poſſible, that ſome other would undertake the dangerous taſk of recalling to his memory there ever was ſuch a perſon as his wife. He adviſed Miſs Woodley to write a proper letter to him on the ſubject; but ſhe reminded

reminded him, that ſuch a ſtep would be more perilous to her, than to any other perſon, as ſhe was the moſt deſtitute being on earth, without the benevolence of Lord Elmwood. The death of her aunt, Mrs. Horton, had left her ſolely relying on the bounty of Lady Elmwood, and now her death, had left her totally dependant upon the Earl — for Lady Elmwood though ſhe had ſeparate effects, had long before her death declared it was not her intention to leave a ſentence behind her in the form of a will.—She had no will, ſhe ſaid, but what ſhe would wholly ſubmit to Lord Elmwood's; and, if it were even his will, that her child ſhould live in poverty, as well as baniſhment, it ſhould be ſo.—But, perhaps, in this implicit ſubmiſſion to him, there was a diſtant hope, that the neceſſitous ſituation of his daughter, might

plead

plead more forcibly than his parental love; and that knowing her bereft of every ſupport but through himſelf, that idea might form ſome little tie between them, and be at leaſt a token of the relationſhip.

But as Lady Elmwood anxiouſly wiſhed this principle upon which ſhe acted, ſhould be concealed from his ſuſpicion, ſhe included her friend, Miſs Woodley, in the ſame fate; and thus, the only perſons dear to her, ſhe left, but at Lord Elmwood's pleaſure, to be preſerved from periſhing in want.—Her child was too young to adviſe her on this ſubject, her friend too diſintereſted; and at this moment they were both without the ſmalleſt means of ſubſiſtence, except through the juſtice or compaſſion of Lord Elmwood.—Sandford had

indeed, promiſed his protection to the daughter; but his liberality had no other ſource than from his patron, with whom he ſtill lived as uſual, except during part of the winter, when the Earl reſided in town; he then moſtly ſtole a viſit to Lady Elmwood — On this laſt viſit he ſtaid to ſee her buried.

After ſome mature deliberations, Sandford was now preparing to go to Lord Elmwood at his houſe in town, and there, to deliver himſelf the news that muſt ſooner or later be told; and he meant alſo to venture, at the ſame time, to keep the promiſe he had made to his dying Lady—but the news reached his Lordſhip before Sandford arrived; it was announced in the public papers, and by that means firſt came to his knowledge.

He

He was breakfasting by himself, when the newspaper that first gave the intelligence of Lady Elmwood's death, was laid before him — the paragraph contained these words:

"On Wednesday last died, at Dring "Park, a village in Northumberland, "the right honourable Countess Elm-"wood—This lady, who has not been "heard of for many years in the fa-"shionable world, was a rich heiress, "and of extreme beauty; but although "she received overtures from many "men of the first rank, she preferred "her guardian, the present Lord Elm-"wood (then Mr. Dorriforth) to them "all—and it is said, their marriage was "followed by an uncommon share of fe-"licity, till his Lordship going abroad, "and remaining there some time, the

"con-

" conſequences (to a moſt captivating
" young woman left without a protector)
" were ſuch as to cauſe a ſeparation on
" his return.— Her Ladyſhip has left
" one child by the Earl, a daughter,
" about fifteen."

Lord Elmwood had ſo much feeling upon reading this, as to lay down the paper, and not take it up again for ſeveral minutes—nor did he taſte his chocolate during this interval, but leaned his elbow on the table and reſted his head upon his hand.—He then roſe up —walked two or three times acroſs the room—ſat down again—took up the paper—and read as uſual.——Nor let the vociferous mourner, or the perpetual weeper, here complain of his want of ſenſibility — but let them remember that Lord Elmwood was a man

—a man of underſtanding—of courage —of fortitude — above all, a man of the niceſt feelings — and who ſhall ſay, but that at the time he leaned his head upon his hand, and roſe to walk away the ſenſe of what he felt, he might not feel as much as Lady Elmwood did in her laſt moments.

Be this as it may, his ſuſceptibility on the occaſion was not ſuſpected by any one—Yet he paſſed that day the ſame as uſual; the next day too, and the day after.—On the morning of the fourth, he ſent for his ſteward to his ſtudy, and after talking of other buſineſs, ſaid to him.

"Is it true that Lady Elmwood is dead?"

"It is, my Lord."

His Lordſhip looked unuſually grave, and

and at this reply, fetched an involuntary ſigh.

" Mr. Sandford," my lord, continued the ſteward, ſent me word of the news, but left it to my own diſcretion, whether I would make your Lordſhip acquainted with it or not: I let him know I declined."

" Where is Sandford?" aſked Lord Elmwood.

" He was with my Lady." replied the ſteward.

" When ſhe died?" aſked he.

" Yes, my Lord."

" I am glad of it — he will ſee that every thing ſhe deſired is done—Sandford is a good man, and would be a friend to every body."

" He is a very good man indeed, my Lord."

" There

There was now a ſilence.——Mr. Giffard then bowing, ſaid "Has your Lordſhip any further commands?"

"Write to Sandford," ſaid Lord Elmwood, heſitating as he ſpoke, "and tell him to have every thing performed as ſhe deſired.—And whoever ſhe may have ſelected for the guardian of her child, has my conſent to act as ſuch—Nor in one inſtance, where I myſelf am not concerned, ſhall I oppoſe her will."—The tears ruſhed into his eyes as he ſaid this, and cauſed them to ſtart in the ſteward's—obſerving which, he ſternly reſumed,

"Do not ſuppoſe from this converſation, that any of thoſe reſolutions I have long ſince taken, are, or will be changed—they are the ſame; and ſhall continue inflexible."

I under-

"I underſtand you, my Lord," replied Mr. Giffard, "your expreſs orders, to me, as well as to every other perſon, remain juſt the ſame as formerly, never to mention this ſubject to you again."

"They do, Sir."

"My Lord, I always obeyed you, and hope I always ſhall."

"I hope ſo too," he replied in a threatening accent—"Write to Sandford," continued he, "to let him know my pleaſure, and that is all you have to do."

The ſteward bowed and withdrew.

But before his letter arrived to Sandford, Sandford arrived in town; and Mr. Giffard related, word for word, what had paſſed between him and his Lord. — Upon every occaſion, and upon every topic, except that of Lady

Elmwood and her child, Sandford was juſt as free with Lord Elmwood as he had ever been; and as uſual (after his interview with the ſteward) went into his apartment without any previous notice. Lord Elmwood ſhook him by the hand, as upon all other meetings; and yet, whether his fear ſuggeſted it or not, Sandford thought he appeared more cool and reſerved with him than formerly.

During the whole day, the ſlighteſt mention of Lady Elmwood, or of her child, was cautiouſly avoided—and not till the evening, (after Sandford had riſen to retire, and had wiſhed Lord Elmwood good night) did he dare to mention the ſubject.——He then, after taking leave, and going to the door—turned back and ſaid, "My Lord,"—

It was eaſy to gueſs on what he was preparing to ſpeak—his voice failed, the tears began to trickle down his cheeks, he took out his handkerchief, and could proceed no farther.

"I thought," ſaid Lord Elmwood, angrily, "I thought I had given my orders upon the ſubject — did not my ſteward write them to you?"

"He did, my Lord," ſaid Sandford, humbly, "but I was ſet out before they arrived."

"Has he not *told* you my mind then?" cried he, more angrily ſtill.

"He has;" replied Sandford, — "But"———

"But what, Sir?"—cried Lord Elmwood.

"Your Lordſhip," continued Sandford, "was miſtaken in ſuppoſing

that Lady Elmwood left a will, ſhe left none."

"No will? no will at all?" returned he, ſurpriſed.

"No, my Lord," anſwered Sandford, "ſhe wiſhed every thing to be as you willed."

"She left me all the trouble, then, you mean?"

"No great trouble, Sir; for there are but two perſons whom ſhe has left behind her, to hope for your protection."

"And who are thoſe two?" cried he haſtily.

"One, my Lord, I need not name—the other is Miſs Woodley."

There was a delicacy and humility in the manner in which Sandford delivered this reply, that Lord Elmwood

wood could *not* reſent, and he only returned,

"Miſs Woodley—is ſhe yet living?"

"She is—I left her at the houſe I came from."

"Well then," anſwered he, "you muſt ſee that my ſteward provides for thoſe two perſons.—That care I leave to you—and ſhould there be any complaints, on you they fall."

Sandford bowed and was going.

"And now, reſumed Lord Elmwood, in a more ſtern voice, "let me never hear again on this ſubject.—You have power to act in regard to the perſons you have mentioned; and upon you their ſituation, the care, the whole management of them depends—but be ſure you never let them be named before me, from this moment."

"Then," ſaid Sandford, "as this muſt

be the laſt time they are mentioned, I muſt now take the opportunity to diſburden my mind of a charge"—

"What charge?" cried Lord Elmwood, moroſely interrupting him.

"Though Lady Elmwood, my Lord, left no will behind her, ſhe left a requeſt."

"A requeſt!"—ſaid he, ſtarting—"If it is for me to ſee her daughter, I tell you now before you aſk, that I will not grant it—for by heaven (and he ſpoke and looked moſt ſolemnly) though I have no reſentment againſt the innocent child, and wiſh her happy, yet I will never ſee her.—Never, for her mother's ſake, ſuffer my heart again to be ſoftened by an object I might dote upon.—Therefore, Sir, if that is the requeſt, it is already anſwered; my will is fixed."

"The

"The requeſt, my Lord," replied Sandford, (and he took out a pocket-book from whence he drew ſeveral papers) "is contained in this letter; nor do I rightly know what its contents are."—And he held it out to him.

"Is it Lady Elmwood's writing?" aſked Lord Elmwood, extremely diſcompoſed.

"It is, my Lord—She wrote it a few days before ſhe died, and enjoined me to deliver it to you, with my own hands."

"I refuſe to read it:" cried he, putting it from him—and trembling while he did ſo.

"She deſired me, ſaid Sandford, (ſtill preſenting the letter) to conjure you to read it, *for her father's ſake.*"

Lord Elmwood took it inſtantly.—But as ſoon as it was in his hand, he ſeemed

diſtreſſed to know what he ſhould do with it—in what place to go and read it—or how to fortify himſelf againſt its contents.—He appeared aſhamed too, that he had been ſo far prevailed upon, and ſaid, by way of excuſe,

"For Mr. Milner's ſake I would do much—nay, any thing, but that to which I have juſt now ſworn never to conſent.—For his ſake I have borne a great deal—for his ſake alone, his daughter died my wife.—You know, no other motive than reſpect for him, prevented my divorcing her.—Pray (and he heſitated) was ſhe buried with him?"

"No, my Lord—ſhe expreſſed no ſuch deſire; and as that was the caſe, I did not think it neceſſary to carry the corpſe ſo far."

At the word corpſe, Lord Elmwood ſhrunk, and looked ſhocked beyond meaſure

meaſure—but recovering himſelf, ſaid, "I am ſorry for it;—for he loved *her* ſincerely, if ſhe did not love him — and I wiſh they had been buried together.

"It is not then too late," ſaid Sandford, and was going on—but the other interrupted him.

"No, no—we will have no diſturbing the dead."

"Read her letter then," ſaid Sandford, "and bid her reſt in peace,"

"If it is in my power," returned he, "to grant what ſhe aſks, I will —but if her demand is what I apprehend, I cannot, I will not, bid her reſt by complying.—You know my reſolution, my diſpoſition, and take care how you provoke me.—You may do an injury to the very peſon you are ſeeking to befriend—the very maintenance

I mean

I mean to allow her daughter I can withdraw."

Poor Sandford, all alarmed at this menace, replied with energy, "My Lord, unleſs you begin the ſubject, I never ſhall preſume to mention it again."

"I take you at your word, and in conſequence of that, but of that alone, we are friends.—Good night, Sir."

Sandford bowed with humility, and they went to their ſeparate bedchambers.

CHAPTER IV.

AFTER Lord Elmwood had retired into his chamber, it was ſome time before he read the letter Sandford had given him. He firſt walked backwards and forwards in the room — he then began to take off ſome part of his dreſs, but he did it ſlowly. At length, he diſmiſſed his valet, and ſitting down, took the letter from his pocket. — He looked at the ſeal, but not at the direction; for he ſeemed to dread ſeeing Lady Elmwood's hand writing.—He then laid it on the table, and began again to undreſs. He did not proceed, but taking up the letter quickly, (with a kind of effort

effort in making the resolution) broke it open. These were its contents:

" My Lord,

" Who writes this letter I well know " —I well know also to whom it is ad- " dressed—I feel with the most power- " ful force both our situations; — nor " should I dare to offer you even this " humble petition, but that at the time " you receive it, there will be no such " person as I am, in existence.

" For myself, then, all concern will " be over—but there is a care that pur- " sues me to the grave, and threatens " my want of repose even there.

" I leave a child—I will not call her " mine: that has undone her—I will not " call her yours; that will be of no avail — I pre-

" —I preſent her before you as the grand-
" daughter of Mr. Milner.—Oh! do
" not refuſe an aſylum even in your
" own houſe, to the deſtitute offspring
" of your friend; the laſt, and only
" remaining branch of his family.

" Receive her into your houſehold,
" be her condition there ever ſo abject.
" — I cannot write diſtinctly what I
" would — my ſenſes are not impaired,
" but the powers of expreſſion are.—
" The complaint of the unfortunate
" child in the ſcriptures (a leſſon I have
" ſtudied) has made this wiſh cling ſo
" faſt to my heart, that without the diſ-
" tant hope of its being fulfilled, death
" would have more terrors than my weak
" mind could ſupport.

" *I will*

'*I will go to my father; how many*
'*ſervants live in my father's houſe, and*
'*are fed with plenty, while I ſtarve in a*
'*foreign land?*'

"I do not aſk a parent's feſtive re-
"joicing at her approach—I do not even
"aſk her father to behold her;—but let
"her live under his protection.—For her
"grandfather's ſake do not refuſe this—
"to the child of his child, whom he en-
"truſted to your care, do not refuſe it.
"Be her hoſt; I remit the tie of
"being her parent.—Never ſee her—
"but let her ſometimes live under the
"ſame roof with you.

"It is Miſs Milner, your ward, to
"whom you never refuſed a requeſt,
"who ſupplicates you—not now for
"your nephew, Ruſhbrook, but for one ſo
"much

" much more dear, that a denial—— ſhe
" dares not ſuffer her thoughts to glance
" that way—She will hope—and in that
" hope, bids you farewell, with all the
" love ſhe ever bore you.

" Farewell Dorriforth—farewell Lord
" Elmwood—and before you throw this
" letter from you with contempt or
" anger, caſt your imagination into the
" grave where I am lying.—Reflect up-
" on all the days of my paſt life—the
" anxious moments I have known, and
" what has been their end.— Behold
" *me*, alſo—in my altered face there is
" no axiety—no joy or ſorrow—all is
" over.——My whole frame is motion-
" leſs—my heart beats no more.—Look
" at my horrid habitation, too,—and aſk
" yourſelf—whether I am an object of
" reſentment?"

While

While Lord Elmwood read this letter, it trembled in his hand: he once or twice wiped the tears from his eyes as he read, and once laid the letter down for a few minutes. At its concluſion, the tears flowed faſt down his face; but he ſeemed both aſhamed and angry they did, and was going to throw the paper upon the fire—he however ſuddenly checked his hand, and putting it haſtily into his pocket, went to bed.

CHAPTER V.

THE next morning, when Lord Elmwood and Sandford met at breakfaſt, the latter was pale with fear for the ſucceſs of Lady Elmwood's letter—the Earl was pale too, but there was beſides upon his face, ſomething which evidently marked he was diſpleaſed—Sandford obſerved it, and was all humbleneſs, both in his words and looks, in order to ſoften him.

As ſoon as the breakfaſt was removed, Lord Elmwood drew the letter from his pocket, and holding it towards Sandford, ſaid,

"That, may be of more value to you, than it is to me, therefore I give it you."

Sandford called up a look of ſurpriſe, as if he did not know the letter again.

"'Tis Lady Elmwood's letter," ſaid Lord Elmwood, "and I return it to you for two reaſons."

Sandford took it, and putting it up, aſked fearfully, "What thoſe two reaſons were?"

"Firſt," ſaid he, "becauſe I think it is a relick you may like to preſerve—my ſecond reaſon is, that you may ſhew it to her daughter, and let her know why, and on what conditions, I grant her mother's requeſt."

"You *do* then grant it?" cried Sandford joyfully; "I thank you—you are kind—you are conſiderate."

"Be not haſty in your gratitude; you may have cauſe to recall it."

"I know what you have ſaid;" replied Sandford, "you have ſaid you grant Lady Elmwood's requeſt—you cannot recall theſe words, nor I my gratitude."

"Do you know what her requeſt is?" returned he.

"Not exactly, my Lord—I told you before, I did not; but it is no doubt ſomething in favour of her child."

"I think not," he replied: "ſuch as it is, however, I grant it:—but in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the word—no farther—and one neglect of my commands, releaſes me from this promiſe totally."

"We will take care, Sir, not to diſobey them."

"Then liſten to what they are, for to you I give the charge of delivering them again.—Lady Elmwood has petitioned me in the name of her father, (a name I reverence) to give his grandchild the ſanction of my protection.—In the literal ſenſe, to ſuffer that ſhe may reſide at one of my ſeats; diſpenſing at the ſame time with my ever ſeeing her."

"And you will comply?"

"I will, till ſhe encroaches on this conceſſion, and dares to hope for a greater.—I will, while ſhe avoids my ſight, or the giving me any remembrance of her.—But if, whether by deſign or by accident, I ever ſee or hear from her, that moment, my compliance to her mother's ſupplication ceaſes, and I abandon her once more."

Sandford

Sandford ſighed.—Lord Elmwood continued:

"I am glad her requeſt ſtopped where it did.—I would rather comply with her deſires than not; and I rejoice they are ſuch as I can grant with eaſe and honour to myſelf. I am ſeldom now at Elmwood caſtle; let her daughter go there;—the few weeks or months I am down in the ſummer, ſhe may eaſily in that extenſive houſe avoid me—while ſhe does, ſhe lives in ſecurity—when ſhe does not—you know my reſolution."

Sandford bowed—the Earl reſumed:

"Nor can it be a hardſhip to obey this command—ſhe cannot lament the ſeparation from a parent whom ſhe never knew—" Sandford was going eagerly to prove the error of that aſſertion, but he prevented him, ſaying, "In a

word—without farther argument—if ſhe obeys me in this, I will provide for her as my daughter during my life, and leave her a fortune at my death—but if ſhe dares—"

Sandford interrupted the menace prepared for utterance, ſaying, "and you ſtill mean, I ſuppoſe, to make Mr. Ruſhbrook your heir?"

"Have you not heard me ſay ſo? And do you imagine I have changed my determination? I am not given to alter my reſolutions, Mr. Sandford; and I thought you knew I was not;—beſides, will not my title be extinct, whoever I make my heir?—Could any thing but a ſon have preſerved my title?"

"Then it is yet poſſible——"

"By marrying again, you mean?—No—no—I have had enough of marriage

riage—and Henry Ruſhbrook I ſhall leave my heir.—Therefore, Sir——"

"My Lord, I do not preſume—"

"Do not, Sandford, and we may ſtill be good friends.—But I am not to be controlled as formerly; my temper is changed of late; changed to what it was originally; till your religious precepts reformed it. You may remember, how troubleſome it was, to conquer my ſtubborn diſpoſition in my youth; *then*, indeed, you *did*; but in my more advanced age, you will find the taſk too difficult."

Sandford again repeated, "He ſhould not preſume—"

To which Lord Elmwood again made anſwer, "Do not, Sandford;" and added, "for I have a ſincere regard for you, and ſhould be loath, at theſe years, to quarrel with you ſeriouſly."

Sandford turned away his head to conceal his feelings.

"Nay, if we do quarrel," resumed Lord Elmwood, "You know it must be your own fault;—and as this is a theme the most likely of any, nay, the only one on which we can have a difference (such as we cannot forgive) take care never from this day to resume it;—indeed that of itself, would be an offence I could not pardon.—I have been clear and explicit in all I have said; there can be no fear of mistaking my meaning; therefore, all future explanation is unnecessary—nor will I permit a word, or a hint on the subject from any one, without shewing my resentment even to the hour of my death." He was going out of the room.

"But before we bid adieu to the subject for ever, my Lord—there was another person whom I named to you—"

"Do

"Do you mean Miſs Woodley?—Oh, by all means let her live at Elmwood Houſe too.—On conſideration, I have no objection to ſee Miſs Woodley at any time—I ſhall be glad to ſee her.—do not let *her* be frightened at me—to her I ſhall be the ſame, that I have always been."

"She is a good woman, my Lord," cried Sandford, pleaſed.

"You need not tell me that, Mr. Sandford; I know her worth."—And he left the room.

Sandford, to relieve Miſs Woodley and her lovely charge from the ſuſpence in which he had left them, prepared to ſet off for their habitation, in order himſelf to conduct them from thence to Elmwood Caſtle, and appoint ſome retired part of it for Lady Matilda,

Matilda, againſt the annual viſit her father ſhould pay there. But before he left London, Giffard, the ſteward, took an opportunity to wait upon him, and let him know, that his Lord had acquainted him with the conſent he had given for his daughter to be admitted at Elmwood Caſtle, and upon what reſtrictions: that he had farther uttered the ſevereſt threats, ſhould theſe reſtrictions ever be infringed. Sandford thanked Giffard for his friendly information. It ſerved him as a ſecond warning of the circumſpection that was neceſſary; and having taken leave of his friend and patron, under the pretence that "He could not live in the ſmoke of London," he ſet out for the North.

It is unneceſſary to ſay with what delight Sandford was received by Miſs Woodley,

Woodley, and the hapleſs daughter of Lady Elmwood, even before he told his errand. They both loved him ſincerely; more eſpecially Lady Matilda, whoſe forlorn ſtate, and innocent ſufferings, had ever excited his compaſſion and cauſed him to treat her with affection, tenderneſs, and reſpect. She knew, too, how much he had been her mother's friend; for that, ſhe alſo loved him; and for being honoured with the friendſhip of her father, ſhe looked up to him with reverence. For Matilda (with an excellent underſtanding, a ſedateneſs above her years, and early accuſtomed to the moſt private converſe between Lady Elmwood and Miſs Woodley) was perfectly acquainted with the whole fatal hiſtory of her mother; and was, by her, taught the reſpect and admiration

miration of her father's virtues which they juſtly merited.

Notwithſtanding the joy of Mr. Sandford's preſence, once more to cheer their ſolitary dwelling; no ſooner were the firſt kind greetings over, than the dread of what he might have to inform them of, poſſeſſed poor Matilda and Miſs Woodley ſo powerfully, that all their gladneſs was changed into affright.—Their apprehenſions were far more forcible than their curioſity; — they dared not aſk a queſtion, and even began to wiſh he would continue ſilent upon the ſubject on which they feared to liſten.—For near two hours he was ſo.——At length, after a ſhort interval from ſpeaking, (during which they waited with anxiety for what he might next ſay) he turned to Lady Matilda, and ſaid,

" You

"You don't aſk for your father, my dear."

"I did not know it was proper:" ſhe replied, timidly.

"It is always proper," anſwered Sandford, "for *you* to think of him, though he ſhould never think on you."

She burſt into tears, and ſaid that ſhe "*Did* think of him, but ſhe felt an apprehenſion of mentioning his name."—and ſhe wept bitterly while ſhe ſpoke.

"Do not think I reproved you," ſaid Sandford; "I only told you what was right."

"Nay," ſaid Miſs Woodley, "ſhe does not weep for that—ſhe fears her father has not complied with her mother's requeſt.—Perhaps—not even read her letter?"

"Yes, he *has* read it." returned Sandford.

"Oh

"Oh Heavens!" exclaimed Matilda, claſping her hands together, and the tears falling ſtill faſter.

"Do not be ſo much alarmed, my dear," ſaid Miſs Woodley; "you know we are prepared for the worſt; and you know you promiſed your mother, whatever your fate ſhould be, to ſubmit with patience."

"Yes," replied Matilda, "and I am prepared for every thing, but my father's refuſal to my dear mother."

"Your father has not refuſed your mother's requeſt," replied Sandford.

She was leaping from her ſeat in ecſtaſy.

"But," continued he, "do you know what her requeſt was?"

"Not entirely," replied Matilda, "and ſince it is granted, I am careleſs.—

But

But ſhe told me her letter concerned none but me."

To explain perfectly to Matilda, Lady Elmwood's letter, and that ſhe might perfectly underſtand upon what terms ſhe was admitted into Elmwood Caſtle, Sandford now read the letter to her; and repeated, as nearly as he could remember, the whole of the converſation that paſſed between Lord Elmwood and himſelf; not even ſparing, through an erroneous delicacy, any of thoſe threats her father had denounced, ſhould ſhe dare to tranſgreſs the limits he preſcribed—nor did he try to ſoften, in one inſtance, a word he uttered.—She liſtened ſometimes with tears, ſometimes with hope, but always with awe, and with terror, to every ſentence in which her father was concerned. Once ſhe called him cruel—then exclaimed "He

was

was kind;" but at the end of Sandford's intelligence, concluded "that ſhe was happy and grateful for the boon beſtowed."—Even her mother had not a more exalted idea of Lord Elmwood's worth than his daughter had formed; and this little bounty juſt obtained, would not have been greater in her mother's eſtimation, than it was now in hers.—Miſs Woodley, too, ſmiled at the proſpect before her — ſhe eſteemed Lord Elmwood beyond any mortal living — ſhe was proud to hear what he had ſaid in her praiſe, and overjoyed at the proſpect of being once again in his company; painting at the ſame time a thouſand bright hopes, from watching every emotion of his ſoul, and catching every proper occaſion to excite or increaſe his paternal ſentiments. — Yet ſhe had the prudence to conceal

thoſe vague hopes from his child, leſt a diſappointment might prove fatal; and aſſuming a behaviour neither too much elated or depreſſed, ſhe adviſed that they ſhould hope for the beſt, but yet, as uſual, expect and prepare for the worſt.—— After taking meaſures for quitting their melancholy abode, within the fortnight, they all departed for Elmwood Caſtle— Matilda, Miſs Woodley, and even Sandford, firſt viſiting Lady Elmwood's grave, and bedewing it with their tears.

CHAPTER VI.

IT was on a dark evening in the month of March, that Lady Matilda, accompanied by Sandford and Miſs Woodley, arrived at Elmwood Caſtle, the magnificent ſeat of her father.—Sandford choſe the evening, rather to ſteal into the houſe privately, than by any appearance of parade, to ſuffer Lord Elmwood to be reminded of their arrival by the public prints, or by any other accident.—Nor would he give the neighbours or ſervants reaſon to ſuppoſe, the daughter of their Lord was admitted into his houſe, in any other ſituation than that, in which ſhe really was permitted to be there.

As

As the porter opened the gates of the avenue to the carriage that brought them, Matilda felt an awful, and yet gladſome ſenſation, which no terms can deſcribe—As ſhe entered the door of the houſe this ſenſation increaſed—and as ſhe paſſed along the ſpacious hall, the ſplendid ſtaircaſe, and many ſtately apartments, wonder, with a crowd of the tendereſt, yet moſt afflicting ſentiments, ruſhed to her heart.—She gazed with aſtoniſhment!—ſhe reflected with ſtill more.

"And is *my father* the maſter of this houſe?" ſhe cried—"and was my mother once the miſtreſs of this caſtle?"—Here tears relieved her from a part of that burthen, which was before inſupportable.

"Yes," replied Sandford, "and you are the miſtreſs of it now, till your father arrives."

"Good God!" exclaimed ſhe, "and will he ever arrive? and ſhall I live to ſleep under the ſame roof with my father?"

"My dear," replied Miſs Woodley, "have not you been told ſo?"

"Yes," ſaid ſhe, "but though I heard it with extreme pleaſure, yet the idea never ſo forcibly affected me as at this moment.—I now feel, as the reality approaches, that to be admitted here, is kindneſs enough—I do not aſk for more—I am now convinced, from what this trial makes me feel, that to ſee my father, would occaſion emotions I could not ſurvive."

The next morning gave to Matilda, more objects of admiration and wonder, as ſhe walked over the extenſive gardens, groves, and other pleaſure grounds

grounds belonging to the houſe. She, who had never been beyond the dreary, ruinous places which her deceaſed mother had made her reſidence, was naturally ſtruck with amazement and delight at the grandeur of a ſeat, which travellers came for miles to ſee, nor thought their time miſpent.

There was one object, however, among all ſhe ſaw, which attracted her attention above the reſt, and ſhe would ſtand for hours to look at it.—This was a whole length portrait of Lord Elmwood, eſteemed a very capital picture, and a perfect likeneſs—to this picture ſhe would ſigh and weep; though when it was firſt pointed out to her, ſhe ſhrunk back with fear, and it was ſome time before ſhe dared venture to caſt her eyes completely upon it. In the features of her father

ſhe was proud to diſcern the exact mould in which her own appeared to have been modelled; yet Matilda's perſon, ſhape, and complexion were ſo extremely like what her mother's once were, that at the firſt glance ſhe appeared to have a ſtill greater reſemblance of her, than of her father—but her mind and manners were all Lord Elmwood's; ſoftened by the delicacy of her ſex, the extreme tenderneſs of her heart, and the melancholy of her ſituation.

She was now in her ſeventeenth year—of the ſame age, within a year and a few months, of her mother, when ſhe became the ward of Dorriforth.—She was juſt three years old when her father went abroad, and remembered ſomething of bidding him farewell; but more of taking cherries

cherries from his hand, as he pulled them from the tree to give to her.

Educated in the ſchool of adverſity, and inured to retirement from her infancy, ſhe had acquired a taſte for all thoſe amuſements which a recluſe life affords.—She was fond of walking and riding—was accompliſhed in the arts of muſic and drawing, by the moſt careful inſtructions of her mother—and as a ſcholar, ſhe excelled moſt of her ſex, from the pains which Sandford had taken with that part of her education, and the ſuperior abilities he poſſeſſed for the taſk.

In devoting certain hours of the day to ſtudy with him, others to muſic, riding, and ſuch amuſements, Matilda's time never appeared tedious at Elmwood Caſtle, although ſhe received

and paid no one viſit—for it was ſoon divulged in the neighbourhood, upon what ſtipulation ſhe reſided at her father's, and ſtudiouſly intimated, that the moſt prudent and friendly behaviour of her true friends, would be, to take no notice whatever that ſhe lived among them: and as Lord Elmwood's will was a law all around, ſuch was the conſequence of that will, known, or merely ſuppoſed.

Neither did Miſs Woodley regret the want of viſitors, but found herſelf far more ſatisfied in her preſent ſituation, than her moſt ſanguine hopes could have formed—She had a companion whom ſhe loved with an equal fondneſs, with which ſhe had loved her deceaſed mother; and frequently, in this charming manſion, where ſhe had ſo often beheld

Lady

Lady Elmwood, her imagination repreſented Matilda as her friend riſen from the grave, in her former youth, health, and exquiſite beauty.

In peace, in content, though not in happineſs, the days and weeks paſſed away till about the middle of Auguſt, when preparations began to be made for the arrival of Lord Elmwood. — The week in which he was to come was at length fixed, and ſome part of his retinue was arrived before him.—When this was told Matilda, ſhe ſtarted, and looked juſt as her mother at her age had often done, when in ſpite of her love, ſhe was conſcious that ſhe had offended him, and was terrified at his approach. Sandford obſerving this, put out his hand, and taking hers, ſhook it kindly; and bade her (but it was not in a cheer-

a cheering tone) "not be afraid" This gave her no confidence; and ſhe began, before her father's arrival, to ſeclude herſelf in the apartments allotted for her during the time of his ſtay; and in the timorous expectation of his coming, her appetite declined, and ſhe loſt all her colour. — Even Miſs Woodley, whoſe ſpirits had been for ſome time elated with the hopes ſhe had formed, on drawing near to the teſt, found thoſe hopes vaniſhed; and though ſhe endeavoured to conceal it, ſhe was full of apprehenſions.—Sandford, had certainly fewer fears than either; yet upon the eve of the day on which his patron was to arrive, he was evidently caſt down.

Lady Matilda once aſked him—— "Are you certain, Mr. Sandford, you made no miſtake in reſpect to what Lord

Elmwood ſaid, when he granted my mother's requeſt? Are you ſure he *did* grant it?—Was there nothing equivocal on which he may ground his diſpleaſure ſhould he be told that I am here?—Oh do not let me hazard being once again turned out of his houſe!—Oh! ſave me from provoking him perhaps to curſe me."—And here ſhe claſped her hands together with the moſt fervent petition, in the dread of what might happen.

"If you doubt my words or my ſenſes," ſaid Sandford, "call Giffard, and let him inform you;—the ſame words were repeated to him as to me."

Though from her reaſon, Matilda could not doubt of any miſtake from Mr. Sandford, yet her fears ſuggeſted a thouſand ſcruples; and this reference to the ſteward ſhe received with the utmoſt ſatisfaction, (though ſhe did not think it neceſſary

neceſſary to apply to him) as it perfectly convinced her of the folly of the ſuſpicions ſhe had entertained.

"And yet, Mr. Sandford," ſaid ſhe, "if it is ſo, why are you leſs cheerful than you were? I cannot help thinking but it muſt be your expectation of Lord Elmwood, which has occaſioned this change."

"I don't know," replied Sandford, careleſsly, "but I believe I am grown afraid of your father.—His temper is a great deal altered from what it once was—he raiſes his voice, and uſes harſh expreſſions upon the leaſt provocation—his eyes flaſh lightning, and his face is diſtorted with anger upon the ſlighteſt motives—he turns away his old ſervants at a moment's warning, and no conceſſion can make their peace.—In a word, I am more at my eaſe when I am away from him

him—and I really believe," added he with a ſmile, but with a tear at the ſame time, "I really believe, I am more afraid of *him* in my age, than he was of *me* when he was a boy.

Miſs Woodley was preſent; ſhe and Matilda looked at one another; and each of them ſaw the other turn pale at this deſcription.

The day at length came, on which Lord Elmwood was expected to dinner. —It would have been a high gratification to his daughter to have gone to the top-moſt window of the houſe, and have only beheld his carriage enter the avenue; but it was a gratification which her fears, her tremor, her extreme ſenſibility would not permit her to enjoy.

Miſs Woodley and ſhe, ſat down that day to dinner in their retired apartments, which were detached from the other part of the houſe by a gallery; and of the door leading to the gallery, they had a key to impede any one from paſſing that way, without firſt ringing a bell; to anſwer which, was the ſole employment of a ſervant, who was placed there during the Earl's reſidence, leſt by any accident he might chance to come near that unfrequented part of the houſe; on which occaſion the man was to give immediate notice to his Lady.

Matilda and Miſs Woodley ſat down to dinner, but did not dine.—Sandford dined as uſual, with Lord Elmwood.—When tea was brought, Miſs Woodley aſked the ſervant, who attended, if he had ſeen his Lord.—The man anſwered, "Yes, Madam;

Madam; and he looks vaſtly well."—Matilda wept with joy to hear it.

About nine in the evening, Sandford rang at the bell, and was admitted—never had he been ſo welcome—Matilda hung upon him, as if his recent interview with her father, had endeared him to her more than ever; and ſtaring anxiouſly in his face, ſeemed to enquire of him ſomething about Lord Elmwood, and ſomething that ſhould not alarm her.

"Well—how do you find yourſelf?" ſaid he to her.

"How are you, Mr. Sandford?" ſhe returned, with a ſigh.

"Oh! very well," replied he.

"Is my Lord in a good temper?" aſked Miſs Woodley.

"Yes; very well," replied Sandford, with indifference.

"Did

"Did he ſeem glad to ſee you?" aſked Matilda.

"He ſhook me by the hand," replied Sandford.

"That was a ſign he was glad to ſee you, was it not?" ſaid Matilda.

"Yes; but he could not do leſs."

"Nor more:" replied ſhe.

"He looks very well, our ſervant tells us," ſaid Miſs Woodley.

"Extremely well indeed," anſwered Sandford: "and to tell the truth, I never ſaw him in better ſpirits."

"That is well—" ſaid Matilda, and ſighed a weight of fears from her heart.

"Where is he now, Mr. Sandford?"

"Gone to take a walk about his grounds, and I ſtole here in the mean time."

"What

"What was your converſation during dinner?" aſked Miſs Woodley.

"Horſes, hay, farming, and politics."

"Won't you ſup with him?"

"I ſhall ſee him again before I go to bed?"

"And again to-morrow!"—cried Matilda,—"what happineſs!"

"He has viſitors to-morrow," ſaid Sandford, "coming for a week or two."

"Thank Heaven," ſaid Miſs Woodley, "he will then be diverted from thinking on us."

"Do you know," returned Sandford, "it is my firm opinion, that his thinking of ye at preſent, is the cauſe of his good ſpirits."

"Oh, Heavens!" cried Matilda, lifting up her hands with rapture.

"Nay, do not miſtake me;" ſaid Sandford; "I would not have you build

a foundation for joy upon this ſurmiſe; for if he is in ſpirits that you are in this houſe —ſo near him—poſitively under his protection—yet he will not allow himſelf to think it is the cauſe of his content—and the ſentiments he has adopted, and which are now become natural to him, will remain the ſame as ever; nay, perhaps with greater force, ſhould he ſuſpect his weakneſs (as he calls it) acting in oppoſition to them."

"If he does but think of me with tenderneſs" cried Matilda, "I am recompenſed."

"And what recompenſe would his kind thoughts be to you," ſaid Sandford, "were he to turn you out to beggary?"

"A great deal—a great deal," ſhe replied.

"But how are you to know he has theſe

theſe kind thoughts, if he gives you no proof of them?"

"No, Mr. Sandford; but *ſuppoſing* we could know them without proof."

"But as that is impoſſible," anſwered he, "I ſhall ſuppoſe, till proof appears, that I have been miſtaken in my conjectures."

Matilda looked deeply concerned that the argument ſhould conclude in her diſappointment; for to have believed herſelf thought of with tenderneſs by her father, would have alone conſtituted her happineſs.

When the ſervant came up with ſomething by way of ſupper, he told Mr. Sandford that his Lord was returned from his walk and had enquired for him; Sandford immediately bade his companions good night, and left them.

"How ſtrange is this!" cried Matilda, when Miſs Woodley and ſhe were alone, "My father within a few rooms of me, and yet I am debarred from ſeeing him!—Only by walking a few paces I could be at his feet, and perhaps receive his bleſſing!"

"You make me ſhudder," cried Miſs Woodley; "but ſome ſpirits leſs timid than mine, might perhaps adviſe you to the experiment."

"Not for worlds!" returned Matilda, "no counſel could tempt me to ſuch temerity—and yet to entertain the thought that it is poſſible I could do this, is a ſource of infinite comfort."

This converſation laſted till bed time, and later; for they ſat up beyond their uſual hour to indulge it.

Miſs

Miſs Woodley ſlept little, but Matilda leſs—ſhe awaked repeatedly during the night, and every time ſighed to herſelf, "I ſleep in the ſame houſe with my father! Bleſſed ſpirit of my mother, look down and rejoice."

CHAPTER VII.

THE next day the whole Caſtle appeared to Lady Matilda (though ſhe was in ſome degree retired from it) all tumult and buſtle, as was uſually the caſe while Lord Elmwood was there. She ſaw from her windows, the ſervants running acroſs the yards and park; horſes and carriages driving with fury; all the ſuite of a nobleman; and it ſometimes elated, at other times depreſſed her.

Theſe impreſſions however, and others of fear and anxiety, which her father's arrival had excited, by degrees wore off; and after ſome little time, ſhe was

was in the ſame tranquil ſtate, that ſhe enjoyed before he came.

He had viſitors, who paſſed a week or two with him; he paid viſits himſelf for ſeveral days; and thus the time ſtole away, till it was about four weeks from the time that he had arrived; in which long period, Sandford, with all his penetration, could never clearly diſcover whether he had once called to mind that his daughter was living in the ſame houſe. He had not once named her (that was not extraordinary) conſequently no one dared name her to him; but he had not even mentioned Miſs Woodley, of whom he had ſo lately ſpoken in the kindeſt terms, and had ſaid, "He ſhould take pleaſure in ſeeing her again." From theſe contradictions in Lord Elmwood's behaviour in reſpect to her, it was Miſs Woodley's

plan neither to throw herſelf in his way, nor avoid him. She therefore frequently walked about the houſe while he was in it, not indeed entirely without reſtraint, but at leaſt with the ſhow of liberty. This freedom, indulged for ſome time without peril, became at laſt leſs cautious; and as no ill conſequences had ariſen from its practice, her ſcruples gradually ceaſed.

One morning, however, as ſhe was croſſing the large hall, thoughtleſs of danger, a footſtep at a diſtance alarmed her almoſt without knowing why.—She ſtopped for a moment, thinking to return; the ſteps approached quicker, and before ſhe could retreat, ſhe beheld Lord Elmwood at the other end of the hall, and perceived that he ſaw her.—It was too late to heſitate what was to be done;

done; ſhe could not go back, and had not courage to go on; ſhe therefore ſtood ſtill. Diſconcerted, and much affected at his ſight, (their former intimacy coming to her mind with the many years, and many ſad occurrences paſſed, ſince ſhe laſt ſaw him) all her intentions, all her meditated plans how to conduct herſelf on ſuch an occaſion, gave way to a ſudden ſhock—and to make the meeting yet more diſtreſſing, her very fright, ſhe knew, would ſerve to recall more powerfully to his mind, the ſubject ſhe moſt wiſhed him to forget. The ſteward was with him, and as they came up cloſe by her ſide, Giffard obſerving him look at her earneſtly, ſaid ſoftly, but ſo as ſhe heard him, "My Lord, it is Miſs Woodley." Lord Elmwood took off his hat inſtantly—and, with an apparent friendly warmth, laying hold of her hand, he ſaid,

ſaid, "Indeed, Miſs Woodley, I did not know you—I am very glad to ſee you:" and while he ſpoke, ſhook her hand with a cordiality which her tender heart could not bear—and never did ſhe feel ſo hard a ſtruggle as to reſtrain her tears. But the thought of Matilda's fate—the idea of awakening in his mind a ſentiment that might irritate him againſt his child, wrought more forcibly than every other effort; and though ſhe could not reply diſtinctly, ſhe replied without weeping.—Whether he ſaw her embarraſſment, and wiſhed to releaſe her from it, or was in haſte to conceal his own, he left her almoſt inſtantly: but not till he had entreated ſhe would dine that very day with him and Mr. Sandford, who were to dine without other company.—She curtſied aſſent, and flew to tell Matilda what had occurred.—After liſtening with anxiety

iety and with joy to all ſhe told, Matilda laid hold of that hand which ſhe ſaid Lord Elmwood had held, and preſſed it to her lips with love and reverence.

When Miſs Woodley made her appearance at dinner, Sandford, (who had not ſeen her ſince the invitation, and did not know of it) looked amazed!—on which Lord Elmwood ſaid, "Do you know, Sandford, I met Miſs Woodley this morning, and had it not been for Giffard, I ſhould have paſſed her without knowing her—but Miſs Woodley, if I am not ſo much altered but that you knew me, I take it unkind you did not ſpeak firſt."—She was unable to ſpeak even now—he ſaw it, and changed the converſation; when Sandford eagerly joined in diſcourſe, which relieved him from the pain of the former.

As

As they advanced in their dinner, the embarraſſment of Miſs Woodley and of Mr. Sandford diminiſhed; Lord Elmwood in his turn became, not embarraſſed, but abſent and melancholy.—He now and then ſighed heavily—and called for wine much oftener than he was accuſtomed.

When Miſs Woodley took her leave, he invited her to dine with him and Sandford whenever it was convenient to her;—he ſaid, beſides, many things of the ſame kind, and all with the utmoſt civility, yet not with that warmth with which he had ſpoken in the morning—into *that* he had been ſurpriſed—his coolneſs was the effect of reflection.

When

When ſhe came to Lady Matilda, and Sandford had joined them, they talked and deliberated on what had paſſed.

"You acknowledge Mr. Sandford," ſaid Miſs Woodley, "that you think my preſence affected Lord Elmwood, ſo as to make him much more thoughtful than uſual; if you imagine theſe thoughts were upon Lady Elmwood, I will never intrude again; but if you ſuppoſe that I made him think upon his daughter, I cannot go too often."

"I don't ſee how he can divide thoſe two objects in his mind," replied Sandford, "therefore you muſt e'en viſit him on, and take your chance, what reflections you may cauſe—but, be they what they will, time will ſteal away from you that power of affecting him."

She concurred in the opinion, and occaſionally ſhe walked into Lord Elmwood's apartments,

apartments, dined, or took her coffee with him, as the accident ſuited; and obſerved, according to Sandford's prediction, that time wore off the impreſſion her viſits firſt made. — Lord Elmwood now became juſt the ſame before her as before others.—She eaſily diſcerned, too, through all that politeneſs which he aſſumed—that he was no longer the conſiderate, the forbearing character he formerly was; but haughty, impatient, imperious, and more than ever, *implacable*.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN Lord Elmwood had been at his country ſeat about ſix weeks, Mr. Ruſhbrook, his nephew, and his adopted child—that friendleſs boy whom poor Lady Elmwood firſt introduced into his uncle's houſe, and by her kindneſs preſerved there—arrived from his travels, and was received by his uncle with all the marks of affection due to the man he thought worthy to be his heir. Ruſhbrook had been a beautiful boy, and was now an extremely handſome young man; he had made unuſual progreſs in his ſtudies, had completed the tour of Italy and Germany, and returned home with the air and addreſs of a per-

fect man of fashion—there was, besides, an elegance and persuasion in his manner almost irresistible. — Yet with all those accomplishments, when he was introduced to Sandford, and put forth his hand to take his, Sandford, with evident reluctance, gave it to him; and when Lord Elmwood asked him, in the young man's presence, "If he did not think his nephew greatly improved?" He looked at him from head to foot, and muttered "He could not say he observed it." The colour heightened in Mr. Rushbrook's face upon the occasion, but he was too well bred not to be in perfect good humour.

Sandford saw this young man treated, in the house of Lord Elmwood, with the same respect and attention as if he had been his son; and it was but probable the

the old prieſt would make a compariſon between the ſituation of him, and of Lady Matilda Elmwood.—Before her, it was Sandford's meaning to have concealed his thoughts upon the ſubject, and never to have mentioned it but with compoſure; that was, however, impoſſible—unuſed to hide his feelings, at the name of Ruſhbrook, his countenance would always change, and a ſarcaſtic ſneer, ſometimes a frown of reſentment, would force its way in ſpite of his reſolution.—Miſs Woodley, too, with all her boundleſs charity and good will, was, upon this occaſion, induced to limit their exceſs; and they did not extend ſo far as to reach poor Ruſhbrook.—She even, and in *reality*, did not think him handſome or engaging in his manners—ſhe thought his gaiety frivolouſneſs, his complaiſance affectation,

and his good humour impertinence.—It was impoſſible to conceal thoſe unfavourable ſentiments entirely from Matilda; for when the ſubject aroſe, as it frequently did, Miſs Woodley's undiſguiſed heart, and Sandford's undiſguiſed countenance, told them inſtantly.—Matilda had the underſtanding to imagine, that ſhe was, perhaps, the object who had thus deformed Mr. Ruſhbrook, and frequently (though he was a ſtranger to her, and one who had cauſed her many a jealous heart ach) frequently ſhe would ſpeak in his vindication.

"You are very good," ſaid Sandford, one day to her; "you like him, becauſe you know your father loves him."

This was a hard ſentence for the daughter of Lord Elmwood to hear, to whom her father's love would have been more precious than any other bleſſing—She, however,

however, checked the aſſault of envy, and kindly replied,

"My mother loved him too, Mr. Sandford."

"Yes," anſwered Sandford, "he has been a *grateful* man to your poor mother—She did not ſuppoſe when ſhe took him into the houſe; when ſhe intreated your father to take him; and through her careſſes and officious praiſes of him, firſt gave him that power which he now poſſeſſes over his uncle; ſhe little foreſaw, at that time, his ingratitude, and its effects."

"Very true," ſaid Miſs Woodley, with a heavy ſigh.

"What ingratitude?" aſked Matilda, "do you ſuppoſe Mr. Ruſhbrook is the cauſe that my father will not ſee me? Oh do not pay Lord Elmwood's motive ſo ill a compliment."

"I do not ſay that he is the abſolute cauſe," returned Sandford; but if a parent's heart is void, I would have it remain ſo, till its lawful owner is replaced —uſurpers I deteſt."

"No one can take Lord Elmwood's heart by force," replied his daughter, "it muſt, I believe, be a free gift to the poſſeſſor; and as ſuch, whoever has it, has a right to it."

In this manner ſhe would plead the young man's excuſe — perhaps but to hear what could be ſaid in his diſfavour, for ſecretly his name was bitter to her— and once ſhe exclaimed in vexation, on Sandford's ſaying Lord Elmwood and Mr. Ruſhbrook were gone out ſhooting together,

"All that pleaſure is now eclipſed which I uſed to take in liſtening to the report

report of my father's gun, for I cannot now diſtinguiſh his, from his paraſite's."

Sandford, (much as he diſliked Ruſhbrook) for this expreſſion which compriſed her father in the reflection, turned to Matilda in extreme anger—but as he ſaw the colour mount into her face, for what, in the ſtrong feelings of her heart had eſcaped her lips, he did not ſay a word—and by her tears that followed, he rejoiced to ſee how much ſhe reproved *herſelf*:

Miſs Woodley, vexed to the heart, and provoked every time ſhe ſaw Lord Elmwood and Ruſhbrook together, and ſaw the familiar terms on which this young man lived with his benefactor, now made her viſits to him very ſeldom.—If Lord Elmwood obſerved

this, he did not appear to obſerve it; and though he received her politely when ſhe did pay him a viſit, it was always very coldly; nor did ſhe ſuppoſe if ſhe never went, he would ever aſk for her. For his daughter's ſake, however, ſhe thought it right ſometimes to ſhew herſelf before him; for ſhe knew it muſt be impoſſible that, with all his apparent indifference, he could ever ſee *her* without thinking for a moment on his child; and what one fortunate thought might ſome time bring about, was an object much too ſerious for her to overlook.—She therefore, after remaining confined to her apartments near three weeks, (excepting thoſe anxious walks ſhe and Matilda ſtole, while Lord Elmwood dined, or before he roſe in a morning) went one forenoon into his apartments, where, as uſual, ſhe found

found him, with Mr. Sandford, and Mr. Ruſhbrook.——After ſhe had ſat about half an hour, converſing with them all, though but very little with the latter, Lord Elmwood was called out of the room upon ſome buſineſs; preſently after, Sandford; and now, by no means pleaſed with the companion with whom ſhe was left, ſhe roſe, and was going likewiſe, when Ruſhbrook fixed his ſpeaking eyes upon her, and cried,

"Miſs Woodley, will you pardon me what I am going to ſay?"

"Certainly, Sir—You can, I am ſure, ſay nothing but what I muſt forgive."—But ſhe made this reply with a diſtance and a reſerve, very unlike the uſual manners of Miſs Woodley.

He looked at her earneſtly and cried,

"Ah! Miſs Woodley, you don't behave ſo kindly to me as you uſed to do!"

"I do not underſtand you, Sir,"—ſhe replied very gravely;—"Times are changed, Mr. Ruſhbrook, ſince you were laſt here—you were then but a child."

"Yet I love all thoſe perſons now, that I loved then;" replied he; "and ſo I ſhall for ever."

"But you miſtake, Mr. Ruſhbrook; I was not even then ſo very much the object of your affections—there were other ladies you loved better.—Perhaps you don't remember Lady Elmwood?"

"Don't I," cried he, "Oh!" (claſping his hands and lifting up his eyes to heaven) "ſhall I ever forget her?"

That

That moment Lord Elmwood opened the door; the converſation of courſe that moment ended; but confuſion, at the ſudden ſurpriſe, was on the face of both parties — he ſaw it, and looked at each of them by turns, with a ſternneſs that made poor Miſs Woodley ready to faint; while Ruſhbrook, with the moſt natural and happy laugh that ever was affected, cried, "No, don't tell my Lord, pray Miſs Woodley."— She was more confuſed than before, and Lord Elmwood turning to him, aſked what the ſubject was.—By this time he had invented one, and, continuing his laugh, ſaid, "Miſs Woodley, my Lord, will to this day proteſt that ſhe ſaw my apparition when I was a boy; and ſhe ſays it is a ſign I ſhall die young, and is really much affected at it."

Lord

Lord Elmwood turned away before this ridiculous ſpeech was concluded; yet ſo well had it been acted, that he did not for an inſtant doubt its truth.

Miſs Woodley felt herſelf greatly relieved; and yet ſo little is it in the power of thoſe we diſlike to do any thing to pleaſe us, that from this very circumſtance, ſhe formed a more unfavourable opinion of Mr. Ruſhbrook than ſhe had done before.—She ſaw in this little incident the art of diſſimulation, cunning, and duplicity in its moſt glaring ſhape; and deteſted the method by which they had each eſcaped Lord Elmwood's ſuſpicion, and perhaps anger, the more, becauſe it was ſo dexterouſly managed.

Lady Matilda and Sandford were both in their turns informed of this trait in

Mr. Ruſhbrook's character; and although Miſs Woodley had the beſt of diſpoſitions, and upon every occaſion ſpoke the ſtricteſt truth, yet in relating this occurrence, ſhe did not ſpeak *all* the truth; for every circumſtance that would have told to the young man's advantage, *literally* had ſlipped her memory.

The twenty-ninth of October arrived; on which a dinner, a ball, and ſupper, was given by Lord Elmwood to all the neighbouring gentry—the peaſants alſo dined in the park off a roaſted bullock, ſeveral caſks of ale were diſtributed, and the bells of the village rung.—Matilda, who heard and ſaw ſome part of this feſtivity from her windows, inquired the cauſe; but even the ſervant who waited upon her had too much ſenſibility to tell her, and anſwered, "He did not know."

Miſs

Miſs Woodley however, ſoon learned the reaſon, and groaning with the painful ſecret, informed her, "Mr. Ruſhbrook on that day was come of age."

"*My* birth-day was laſt week," replied Matilda; but not a word beſide.

In their retired apartments, this day paſſed away not only ſoberly, but almoſt ſilently; for to ſpeak upon any ſubject that did not engage their thoughts had been difficult, and to ſpeak upon the only one that did, had been afflicting.

Juſt as they were ſitting down to dinner their bell gently rung, and in walked Sandford.

"Why are you not among the revellers, Mr. Sandford?" cried Miſs Woodley, with an ironical ſneer—(the firſt her features ever wore)—"Pray, were not you

you invited to dine with the company?"

"Yes," replied Sandford; "but my head ached; and ſo I had rather come and take a bit with you."

Matilda, as if ſhe had ſeen his heart as he ſpoke, clung round his neck and ſobbed on his boſom: he put her peeviſhly away, crying "Nonſenſe, nonſenſe—eat your dinner." But he did not eat himſelf.

CHAPTER IX.

ABOUT a week after this, Lord Elmwood went out two days for a viſit; conſequently Ruſhbrook was for that time maſter of the houſe. The firſt morning he went a ſhooting, and returning about noon, enquired of Sandford, who was ſitting in the room, if he had taken up a volume of plays left upon the table.—"I read no ſuch things," replied Sandford, and quitted the room abruptly. Ruſhbrook then rang for his ſervant, and deſired him to look for the book, aſking him angrily, "Who had been in the apartment? for he was ſure he had left it there when he went out."—The ſervant withdrew to enquire, and preſently

preſently returned with the volume in his hand, and "Miſs Woodley's compliments, ſhe begs your pardon, Sir, ſhe did not know the book was yours, and hopes you will excuſe the liberty ſhe took."

"Miſs Woodley!" cried Ruſhbrook with ſurpriſe, "ſhe comes ſo ſeldom into theſe apartments, I did not ſuppoſe it was her who had it—take it back to her inſtantly, with my reſpects, and I beg ſhe will keep it."

The man went; but returned with the book again, and laying it on the table without ſpeaking, was going away; when Ruſhbrook, hurt at receiving no ſecond meſſage, ſaid, "I am afraid, Sir, you did very wrong when you firſt took this book from Miſs Woodley."

"It was not from her I took it, Sir," replied the man, "it was from Lady Matilda."

Since

Since he had entered the houſe, Ruſhbrook had never before heard the name of Lady Matilda, he was ſhocked — confounded more than ever — and to conceal what he felt, inſtantly ordered the man out of the room.

In the mean time, Miſs Woodley and Matilda were talking over this trifling occurrence; and frivolous as it was, drew from it ſtrong concluſions of Ruſhbrook's inſolence and power.—In ſpite of her pride, the daughter of Lord Elmwood even wept at the inſult ſhe had received on this inſignificant occaſion; for the volume being merely taken from her at Mr. Ruſhbrook's command, ſhe felt an inſult; and the manner in which it was done by the ſervant, might contribute to the offence.

While

While Miſs Woodley and ſhe were upon this converſation, a note came from Ruſhbrook to Miſs Woodley, wherein he entreated he might be permitted to ſee her.—She ſent a verbal anſwer, "She was engaged." He ſent again, begging ſhe would name her own time. But ſure of a ſecond denial, he followed the ſervant who took the laſt meſſage, and as Miſs Woodley came out of her apartment into the gallery to ſpeak to him, Ruſhbrook preſented himſelf, and told the man to retire.

"Mr. Ruſhbrook," ſaid Miſs Woodley, "this intruſion is inſupportable;—and deſtitute as you may think me of the friendſhip of Lord Elmwood"——

In the ardour with which Ruſhbrook was waiting to expreſs himſelf, he interrupted her, and caught hold of her hand.

She immediately ſnatched it from him, and withdrew into her chamber.

He followed, ſaying, in a low voice, "Dear Miſs Woodley hear me."

At that juncture Lady Matilda, who was in an inner apartment, came out of it into Miſs Woodley's.—Perceiving a gentleman, ſhe ſtopped ſhort at the door.

Ruſhbrook caſt his eyes upon her, and ſtood motionleſs—his lips only moved. "Do not depart, Madam," ſaid he, "without hearing my apology for being here."

Though Matilda had never ſeen him ſince her infancy, there was no occaſion to tell her who it was that addreſſed her—his elegant and youthful perſon, joined to the incident which had juſt occurred, convinced her it was Ruſhbrook: ſhe looked at him with an air of ſurprize, but with ſtill more, of dignity.

Miſs

"Miſs Woodley is ſevere upon me, Madam," continued he, "ſhe judges me unkindly; and I am afraid ſhe will prepoſſeſs you with the ſame unfavourable ſentiments."

Still Matilda did not ſpeak, but looked at him with the ſame air of dignity.

"If, Lady Matilda," reſumed he, "I have offended you, and muſt quit you without pardon, I am more unhappy than I ſhould be with the loſs of your father's protection—more forlorn, than when an orphan boy, your mother firſt took pity on me."

At this laſt ſentence, Matilda turned her eyes on Miſs Woodley, and ſeemed in doublt what reply ſhe was to give.

Ruſhbrook immediately fell upon his knees—"Oh! Lady Matilda," cried he, "if you knew the ſenſations of my

heart, you would not treat me with this diſdain."

"We can only judge of thoſe ſenſations, Mr. Ruſhbrook," ſaid Miſs Woodley, "by the effect they have upon your conduct; and while you inſult Lord and Lady Elmwood's daughter by an intruſion like this, and then ridicule her abject ſtate by mockeries like theſe——"

He roſe from his knees inſtantly, and interrupted her, crying, "What can I do?—What am I to ſay, to make you change your opinion of me?—While Lord Elmwood has been at home, I have kept an awful diſtance; and though every moment I breathed was a wiſh to caſt myſelf at his daughter's feet, yet as I feared, Miſs Woodley, that you were incenſed againſt me, by what means was I to procure an interview but by ſtrata-

gem or force?—This accident has given a third method, and I had not ſtrength, I had not courage, to let it paſs.—Lord Elmwood will ſoon return, and we may both of us be hurried to town immediately —then how for a tedious winter could I endure the reflexion that I was deſpiſed, nay, perhaps conſidered as an object of ingratitude, by the only child of my deceaſed benefactreſs?"

Matilda replied with all her father's haughtineſs, "Depend upon it, Sir, if you ſhould ever enter my thoughts, it will only be as an object of envy."

"Suffer me then, Madam," ſaid he, "as an earneſt that you do not think worſe of me than I merit, ſuffer me to be ſometimes admitted into your preſence—."

She would ſcarce permit him to finiſh the period, before ſhe replied, "This is the laſt time, Sir, we ſhall ever meet,

depend upon it—unleſs, indeed, Lord Elmwood ſhould delegate to you the controul of me—*his* commands I never diſpute." And here ſhe burſt into tears.

Ruſhbrook walked towards the window, and did not ſpeak for ſome time—then turning himſelf to make a reply, both Matilda and Miſs Woodley were ſomewhat ſurpriſed to ſee, that he had been ſhedding tears himſelf — Having conquered them, he ſaid, "I will not offend you, Madam, by remaining one moment longer; and I give you my honour, that, upon no pretence whatever, will I preſume to intrude here again. — Profeſſions, I find, have no weight, and only by this obedience to your orders, can I give a proof of that reſpect which you inſpire;—and let the agitation I now feel, convince you, Lady Matilda,

Matilda, that, with all my ſeeming good fortune, I am not happier than yourſelf."—And ſo much was he agitated while he delivered this, that it was with difficulty he came to the concluſion.—When he did, he bowed with reverence, as if leaving the preſence of a deity, and retired.

Matilda immediately entered the chamber ſhe had left, and without caſting a ſingle look at Miſs Woodley by which ſhe might gueſs of the opinion ſhe had formed of Mr. Ruſhbrook's conduct.—The next time they met they did not even mention his name; for they were aſhamed to own a partiality in his favour, and were too juſt to bring any accuſation againſt him.

But Miſs Woodley, the day following, communicated the intelligence of this viſit to Mr. Sandford, who not being preſent, and a witneſs of thoſe marks of humility and reſpect which were conſpicuous in the deportment of Mr. Ruſhbrook, was highly offended at his preſumption, and threatened if he ever dared to force his company there again, he would acquaint Lord Elmwood with his arrogance, whatever might be the event.—Miſs Woodley, however, aſſured him, ſhe believed he would have no cauſe for ſuch a complaint, as the young man had made the moſt ſolemn promiſe never to commit the like offence; and ſhe thought it her duty to enjoin Sandford, till he did repeat it, not to mention the circumſtance, even to Ruſhbrook himſelf.

Matilda

Matilda could not but feel a regard for her father's heir, in return for that which he had ſo fervently declared for her; yet the more favourable her opinion of his mind and manners, the more he became an object of her jealouſy for the affections of Lord Elmwood, and he was now conſequently, an object of greater ſorrow to her, than when ſhe believed him leſs worthy.—Theſe ſentiments were reverſed on his part towards her—no jealouſy intervened to bar his admiration and eſteem—the beauty of her perſon, and grandeur of her mien, not only confirmed, but improved, the exalted idea he had formed of her previous to their meeting, and which his affection to both her parents had inſpired.——The next time he ſaw his benefactor, he began to feel a new eſteem and regard for him, for his daughter's ſake; as he had at firſt an

an eſteem for her, on the foundation of his love for Lord and Lady Elmwood—He gazed with wonder at his uncle's inſenſibility to his own happineſs, and would gladly have led him to the jewel he caſt away, though even his own expulſion ſhould be the fatal conſequence.—Such was the youthful, warm, generous, grateful, but unreflecting mind of Ruſhbrook.

CHAPTER X.

AFTER this incident, Miſs Woodley left her apartments leſs frequently than before—ſhe was afraid, though till now miſtruſt had been a ſtranger to her heart, ſhe was afraid, that duplicity might be concealed under the apparent friendſhip of Ruſhbrook; it did not indeed appear ſo from any part of his behaviour, but ſhe was apprehenſive for the fate of Matilda; ſhe diſliked him too, and therefore ſhe ſuſpected him.—Near three weeks ſhe had not now paid a viſit to Lord Elmwood, and though to herſelf every viſit was a pain, yet as Matilda took a delight in hearing of her father, what he ſaid, what he did, what his

his attention ſeemed moſt employed on, and a thouſand other circumſtantial informations, in which Sandford would ſcorn to be half ſo particular, it was a deprivation to her, that Miſs Woodley did not go oftener.—Now too, the middle of November was come, and it was expected her father would ſoon quit the country.

Partly therefore to indulge her hapleſs companion, and partly becauſe it was a duty, Miſs Woodley once again paid Lord Elmwood a morning viſit, and ſtaid dinner. —Ruſhbrook was officiouſly polite, (for that was the epithet ſhe gave his attention in relating it to Lady Matilda) yet ſhe owned he had not that forward impertinence ſhe had formerly diſcovered in him, but appeared much more grave and ſedate.

"But

"But tell me of my father," ſaid Matilda.

"I was going, my dear—but don't be concerned—dont't let it vex you."

"What? what?" cried Matilda, frightened by the preface.

"Why, on my obſerving that I thought Mr. Ruſhbrook looked paler than uſual, and appeared not to be in perfect health, (which was realy the caſe) your father expreſſed the greateſt anxiety imaginable; he ſaid he could not bear to ſee him look ſo ill, begged him, with all the tenderneſs of a parent, to take the advice of a phyſician, and added a thouſand other affectionate things."

"I deteſt Mr. Ruſhbrook."—ſaid Matilda, with her eyes flaſhing indignation.

"Nay, for ſhame," returned Miſs Woodley; "do you ſuppoſe I told you this, to make you hate him?"

"No

"No, there was no occaſion for that," replied Matilda; "my ſentiments (though I have never before avowed them) were long ago formed; he was always an object which added to my unhappineſs; but ſince his daring intruſion into my apartments, he has been an object of my hatred."

"But now, perhaps, I may tell you ſomething to pleaſe you," cried Miſs Woodley.

"And what is that?" ſaid Matilda, with indifference; for the firſt intelligence had hurt her ſpirits too much to ſuffer her to liſten with pleaſure to any thing.

"Mr. Ruſhbrook," continued Miſs Woodley, "replied to your father, that his indiſpoſition was but a ſlight nervous fever, and he would defer a phyſician's advice till he went to London—on which Lord

Lord Elmwood ſaid, "And when do you expect to be there?"—he replied, "Within a week or two, I ſuppoſe my Lord." But your father anſwered, "I do not mean to go myſelf till after Chriſtmas."—"No indeed, my Lord!" ſaid Mr. Sandford, with ſurpriſe: "you have not paſſed your Chriſtmas here theſe many years."—"No," returned your father; "but I think I feel myſelf more attached to this houſe at preſent, than ever I did in my life."

"You imagine, then, my father thought of me, when he ſaid this?" cried Matilda eagerly.

"But I may be miſtaken," replied Miſs Woodley.—"I leave you to judge.—Though I am ſure Mr. Sandford imagined he thought of you, for I ſaw a ſmile over his whole face immediately."

"Did you, Miſs Woodley?"

"Yes;

"Yes; it appeared on every feature except his lips; thoſe he kept faſt cloſed, for fear Lord Elmwood ſhould perceive it."

Miſs Woodley, with all her minute intelligence, did not however acquaint Matilda, that Ruſhbrook followed her to the window when the Earl was out of the room, and Sandford half aſleep at the other end of it, and inquired reſpectfully but anxiouſly for *her*; adding, "It is my concern for Lady Matilda which makes me thus indiſpoſed: I ſuffer more than ſhe does; but I am not permitted to tell her ſo, nor can I hope Miſs Woodley, you will."—She replied, "You are right, Sir." Nor did ſhe reveal this converſation, while not a ſentence that paſſed except that, was omitted.

When

When Chriſtmas arrived, Lord Elmwood had many convivial days at Elmwood Houſe, but Matilda was never mentioned by one of his gueſts, and moſt probably was never thought of. —During all thoſe holidays, ſhe was unuſually melancholy, but ſunk into the deepeſt dejection when ſhe was told the day was fixed, on which her father was to return to town.—On the morning of that day ſhe wept inceſſantly; and all her conſolation was, "She would go to the chamber window that was fronting the door through which he was to paſs to his carriage, and for the firſt time, and moſt probably for the laſt time in her life, behold him.

This deſign was ſoon forgot in another:—"She would ruſh boldly into the apartment where he was, and at his

feet take leave of him for ever—She would lay hold of his hands, claſp his knees, provoke him to ſpurn her, which would be joy in compariſon to this cruel indifference."—In the bitterneſs of her grief, ſhe once called upon her mother, and reproached her memory—but the moment ſhe recollected this offence, (which was almoſt inſtantaneouſly) ſhe became all mildneſs and reſignation. "What have I ſaid?" cried ſhe; "Dear, dear ſaint, forgive me; and for your ſake I will bear all with patience—I will not groan, I will not even ſigh again—this taſk I ſet myſelf to atone for what I have dared to utter."

While Lady Matilda laboured under this variety of ſenſations, Miſs Woodley was occupied in bewailing and endeavouring to calm her ſorrows—and Lord

Lord Elmwood, with Ruſhbrook, was ready to ſet off.—The Earl, however, loitered, and did not once ſeem in haſte to be gone.—When at laſt he got up to depart, Sandford thought he preſſed his hand, and ſhook it with more warmth than ever he had done in his life.—Encouraged by this ſuppoſition, Sandford, ſaid, "My Lord, won't you condeſcend to take your leave of Miſs Woodley?"—"Certainly, Sandford," replied he, and ſeemed glad of an excuſe to ſit down again.

Impreſſed with the idea of the ſtate in which ſhe had left his only child, Miſs Woodley, when ſhe came before Lord Elmwood to bid him farewell, was pale, trembling, and in tears.—Sandford, notwithſtanding his patron's apparently kind humour, was ſhocked at

the conſtruction he muſt put upon her appearance, and cried, "What, Miſs Woodley, are you not recovered of your illneſs yet?" Lord Elmwood, however, took no notice of her looks, but after wiſhing her, her health, walked ſlowly out of the houſe; turning back frequently and ſpeaking to Sandford, or to ſome other perſon who was behind him, as if part of his thoughts were left behind, and he went with reluctance.

When he had quitted the room where Miſs Woodley was; Ruſhbrook, timid before her, as ſhe had been before her benefactor, went up to her, all humility, and ſaid, "Miſs Woodley, we ought to be friends: our concern, our devotion is paid to the ſame objects, and one common

common intereſt ſhould teach us to be friendly."

She made no reply—"Will you permit me to write to you when I am away?" ſaid he; "You may wiſh to hear of Lord Elmwood's health, and of what changes may take place in his reſolutions—Will you permit me?"——At that moment a ſervant came and ſaid, "Sir, my Lord is in the carriage, and waiting for you." He haſtened away, and Miſs Woodley was relieved from the pain of giving him a denial.

No ſooner was the chaiſe, with all its attendants, out of ſight, than Lady Matilda was conducted by Miſs Woodley from her lonely retreat, into that part of the houſe from whence her father had juſt departed—and ſhe viſited every ſpot where he had ſo long reſided, with a

pleaſing curioſity, that for a while diverted her grief.—In the breakfaſt and dining rooms, ſhe leaned over thoſe ſeats with a kind of filial piety, on which ſhe was told he had been accuſtomed to ſit. And, in the library, ſhe took up with filial delight, the pen with which he had been writing; and looked with the moſt curious attention into thoſe books that were laid upon his reading deſk.—But a hat, lying on one of the tables, gave her a ſenſation beyond any other ſhe experienced on this occaſion—in that trifling article of his dreſs, ſhe thought ſhe ſaw himſelf, and held it in her hand with pious reverence.

In the mean time, Lord Elmwood and Ruſhbrook were proceeding on the road, with hearts not leſs heavy than

than thoſe which they had left at Elmwood Houſe; though neither of them could ſo well define the cauſe of this oppreſſion, as Matilda could account for the weight which oppreſſed hers.

CHAPTER XI.

YOUNG as Lady Matilda was during the life of her mother, neither her youth, nor the recluſe ſtate in which ſhe lived, had precluded her from the notice and ſolicitations of a nobleman who had profeſſed himſelf her lover. Viſcount Margrave had an eſtate not far diſtant from the retreat Lady Elmwood had choſen; and being devoted to the ſports of the country, he ſeldom quitted it for any of thoſe joys which the town offered.—He was a young man, of a handſome perſon, and was, what his neighbours called, "A man of ſpirit."—He was an excellent fox-hunter, and as excellent a companion over his bottle at the

the end of the chace—he was prodigal of his fortune, where his pleaſures were concerned, and as thoſe pleaſures were chiefly ſocial, his ſporting companions and his miſtreſſes (for theſe were alſo of the plural number) partook largely of his wealth.

Two months previous to Lady Elmwood's death, Miſs Woodley and Lady Matilda were taking their uſual walk in ſome fields and lanes near to their houſe, when chance threw Lord Margrave in their way during a thunder ſtorm in which they were ſuddenly caught; and he had the ſatisfaction to convey his new acquaintances to their home in his coach, ſafe from the fury of the elements.—Grateful for the ſervice he had rendered them, Miſs Woodley and her charge, permitted him to enquire occaſionally

onally after their health, and would ſometimes ſee him.—The ſtory of Lady Elmwood was known to Lord Margrave, and as he beheld her daughter with a paſſion ſuch as he had been unuſed to overcome, he indulged it with the probable hope, that on the death of the mother Lord Elmwood would receive his child, and perhaps accept him as his ſon-in-law. —Wedlock was not the plan which Lord Margrave had ever propoſed to himſelf for happineſs; but the exceſs of his love on this new occaſion, ſubdued all the reſolutions he had formed againſt the married ſtate; and not daring to hope for the conſummation of his wiſhes by any other means, he ſuffered himſelf to look forward to that, as his only reſource.—No ſooner was the long expected death of Lady Elmwood arrived, than he waited with impatience to hear that Lady Matilda

tilda was ſent for and acknowledged by her father; for he meant to be the firſt to lay before Lord Elmwood his pretenſions as a ſuitor.—But thoſe pretenſions were founded on the vague hopes of a lover only; and Miſs Woodley, to whom he firſt declared them, ſaid every thing poſſible to convince him of their fallacy.—As to the object of his paſſion, ſhe was not only inſenſible, but wholly inattentive to all that was ſaid to her on the ſubject.—Lady Elmwood died without ever being diſturbed with it; for her daughter did not even remember his propoſals ſo as to repeat them again, and Miſs Woodley thought it prudent to conceal from her friend, every new incident which might give her cauſe for new anxieties.

When

When Sandford and the ladies left the north and came to Elmwood Houſe, ſo much were their thoughts employed with other ideas, that Lord Margrave did not occupy a place; and during the whole time they had been at their new abode, they had never once heard of him.—He had, nevertheleſs, his whole mind fixed upon Lady Matilda, and had placed ſpies in the neighbourhood to inform him of every circumſtance relating to her ſituation.—Having imbibed an averſion to matrimony, he heard with but little regret, that there was no proſpect of her ever becoming her father's heir, while ſuch an information gave him the hope of obtaining her, upon the terms of a miſtreſs.

Lord Elmwood's departure to town forwarded this hope, and flattering himſelf

ſelf that the humiliating ſtate in which Matilda muſt feel herſelf in the houſe of her father might gladly induce her to take ſhelter under any other protection, he boldly advanced as ſoon as the Earl was gone, to make ſuch overture as his wiſhes and his vanity told him, could not be rejected.

Inquiring for Miſs Woodley, he eaſily gained admittance; but at the ſight of ſo much modeſty and dignity in the perſon of Matilda, the appearance of ſo much good will, and yet ſuch circumſpection in her companion; and charmed at the good ſenſe and proper ſpirit which were always apparent in the manners of Sandford, he fell once more into the deſpondency of never becoming to Lady Matilda any thing of more importance to his reputation, than a huſband.

Even

Even that humble hope was ſometimes denied him, while Sandford ſet forth the impropriety of troubling Lord Elmwood on ſuch a ſubject at preſent; and while the Viſcount's penetration, ſmall as it was, diſcovered in his fair one, more to diſcourage, than to favour his wiſhes.—Plunged, however, too deep in his paſſion to emerge from it in haſte, he meant ſtill to viſit, and wait for a change to happier circumſtances, when he was peremptorily deſired by Mr. Sandford to deſiſt from ever coming again.

"And why, Mr. Sandford?" cried he.

"For two reaſons, my Lord;—in the firſt place, your viſits might be diſpleaſing to Lord Elmwood;—in the next place, I know they are ſo to his daughter."

Unac-

Unaccuſtomed to be addreſſed ſo plainly, particularly in a caſe where his heart was intereſted, he nevertheleſs ſubmitted with patience; but in his own mind determined how long this patience ſhould continue—no longer than it ſerved as the means to prove his obedience, and by that artifice, to ſecure his better reception at ſome future period.

On his return home, cheered with the huzzas of his jovial companions, he began to conſult thoſe friends, what ſcheme was beſt to be adopted for the accompliſhment of his deſires.—Some, boldly adviſed application to the father in defiance to the old prieſt; but that was the very laſt method his Lordſhip himſelf approved, as marriage muſt inevitably have followed Lord Elmwood's conſent: beſides, though a Peer,

Lord

Lord Margrave was unuſed to rank with Peers; and even the formality of an interview with one of his equals, carried along with it a terror, or at leaſt a fatigue, to a ruſtic Baron.—Others of his companions adviſed ſeduction; but happily the Viſcount poſſeſſed no arts of this kind, to affect a heart joined with ſuch an underſtanding as Matilda's.—There were not wanting among his moſt favourite counſellors ſome, who painted the ſuperior triumph and gratification of force; thoſe aſſured him there was nothing to apprehend under this head, as from the behaviour of Lord Elmwood to his child, it was more than probable, he would be utterly indifferent as to any violence that might be offered her.—This laſt advice ſeemed inſpired by the aid of wine; and no ſooner had the wine freely circulated, than

this was always the expedient, which appeared by far the beſt.

While Lord Margrave alternately cheriſhed his hopes and his fears in the country, Ruſhbrook in town gave way to his fears only.—Every day of his life made him more acquainted with the firm, unſhaken temper of Lord Elmwood, and every day whiſpered more forcibly to him, that pity, gratitude, and friendſhip, ſtrong and affectionate as theſe paſſions are, were weak and cold to that, which had gained the poſſeſſion of his heart—he doubted, but he did not long doubt, that, which he felt was love.—"And yet," ſaid he to himſelf, "it is love of ſuch a kind, as ariſing from cauſes independent of the object itſelf can ſcarce deſerve that ſacred name.—Did I not love Lady Matilda before I

beheld her?—for her mother's ſake I loved her—and even for her father's.—Should I have felt the ſame affection for her, had ſhe been the child of other parents?—No. Or ſhould I have felt that ſympathetic tenderneſs which now preys upon my health, had not her misfortunes excited it?—No."—Yet the love which is the reſult of gratitude and pity only, he thought had little claim to rank with his; and after the moſt deliberate and deep reflection, he concluded with this deciſive opinion—He had loved Lady Matilda, in *whatever ſtate*, in *whatever circumſtances;* and that the tenderneſs he felt towards her, and the anxiety for her happineſs before he knew her, extreme as they were, were yet cool and diſpaſſionate ſenſations, compared to thoſe which her perſon and demeanour had incited—and though he acknowledged, that

by

by the preceding ſentiments, his heart was ſoftened, prepared, and moulded, as it were, to receive this laſt impreſſion; yet the violence of his paſſion told him that genuine love, if not the baſis on which it was founded, had been the certain conſequence.—With a ſtrict ſcrutiny into his heart he ſought this knowledge, but arrived at it with a regret that amounted to deſpair.

To ſhield him from deſpondency, he formed in his mind a thouſand viſions, diſplaying the joys of his union with Lady Matilda; but her father's implacability confounded them all. Lord Elmwood was a man who made few reſolutions—but thoſe were the effect of deliberation; and as he was not the leaſt capricious or inconſtant in his temper, they were reſolutions which no probable event could

ſhake.—Love, that produces wonders, that ſeduces and ſubdues the moſt determined and rigid ſpirits, had in two inſtances overcome the inflexibility of Lord Elmwood; he married Lady Elmwood contrary to his determination, becauſe he loved; and for the ſake of this beloved object, he had, contrary to his reſolution, taken under his immediate care young Ruſhbrook; but the magic which once enchanted away this ſpirit of immutability was no more—Lady Elmwood was no more, and the charm was broken.

As Miſs Woodley was deprived of the opportunity of deſiring Ruſhbrook not to write, when he aſked her the permiſſion, he paſſed one whole morning, in the gratification of forming and writing a letter to her, which he thought might poſſibly

bly be ſhewn to Matilda.—As he dared not touch upon any of thoſe circumſtances in which he was the moſt intereſted, this, joined to the reſpect he wiſhed to pay the lady to whom he wrote, limited his letter to about twenty lines; yet the ſtudious manner with which theſe lines were dictated, the hope that they might, and the fear that they might not, be ſeen and regarded by Lady Matilda, rendered the taſk an anxiety ſo pleaſing, that he could have wiſhed it might have laſted for a year; and in this tendency to magnify trifles, was diſcoverable, the never-failing ſymptom of ardent love.

A reply to this formal addreſs, was a reward he wiſhed for with impatience, but he wiſhed in vain; and in the midſt of his chagrin at the diſappointment, a ſorrow, little thought of, occurred, and

gave him a perturbation of mind he had never before experienced.—Lord Elmwood propoſed a wife to him; and in a way ſo aſſured of his acquieſcence, that if Ruſhbrook's life had depended upon his daring to diſpute his benefactor's will, he would not have had the courage to have done ſo. There was, however, in his reply, and his embarraſſment, ſomething which his uncle diſtinguiſhed from a free concurrence; and looking ſtedfaſtly at him, he ſaid, in that ſtern manner which he now almoſt invariably adopted,

"You have no engagements, I ſuppoſe! Have made no previous promiſes!"

"None on earth, my Lord," replied Ruſhbrook candidly.

"Nor have you diſpoſed of your heart?"

"No,

"No, my Lord," replied he; but not candidly — nor with any appearance of candour: for though he ſpoke haſtily, it was rather like a man frightened than aſſured.—He hurried to tell the falſehood he thought himſelf obliged to tell, that the pain and ſhame might be over; but there he was deceived—the lie once told was as troubleſome as in the conception, and added another confuſion to the firſt.

Lord Elmwood now fixed his eyes upon him with a ſullen contempt, and riſing from his chair, ſaid, "Ruſhbrook, if you have been ſo inconſiderate as to give away your heart, tell me ſo at once, and tell me the object."

Ruſhbrook ſhuddered at the thought.

"I here," continued the Earl, "tolerate the firſt untruth you ever told me,

as the falſe aſſertion of a lover; and give you an opportunity of recalling it —but after this moment, it is a lie between man and man—a lie to your friend and father, and I will not forgive it."

Ruſhbrook ſtood ſilent, confuſed, alarmed, and bewildered in his thoughts. —Lord Elmwood proceeded:

"Name the perſon, if there is any, on whom you have beſtowed your heart; and though I do not give you the hope that I ſhall not cenſure your folly, I will at leaſt not reproach you for having at firſt denied it."

To repeat theſe words in writing, the reader muſt condemn the young man that he could heſitate to own he loved, if he was even afraid to name the object of his paſſion; but his interrogator had made the two anſwers inſeparable, ſo that

that all evaſions of the ſecond, Ruſhbrook knew would be fruitleſs, after having avowed the firſt—and how could he confeſs the latter? The abſolute orders he received from the ſteward on his firſt return from his travels, were, "Never to mention his daughter, any more than his late wife, before Lord Elmwood."—The fault of having rudely intruded into Lady Matilda's preſence, ruſhed alſo upon his mind; for he did not even dare to ſay, by what means he had beheld her.—But more than all, the threatening manner in which this rational and apparently conciliating ſpeech was uttered, the menaces, the ſeverity which ſat upon the Earl's countenance while he delivered thoſe moderate words, might have intimidated a man wholly independent, and leſs uſed to fear than his nephew had been.

"You

"You make no anſwer, Sir." ſaid Lord Elmwood, after waiting a few moments for his reply.

"I have only to ſay, my Lord," returned Ruſhbrook, "that although my heart may be totally diſengaged, I may yet be diſinclined to marriage."

"May! May! Your heart *may* be diſengaged," repeated he. "Do you dare to reply to me equivocally, when I have aſked a poſitive anſwer?"

"Perhaps I am not poſitive myſelf, my Lord; but I will enquire into the ſtate of my mind, and make you acquainted with it very ſoon."

As the angry demeanour of his uncle affected Ruſhbrook with fear, ſo that fear, powerfully (but with proper manlineſs) expreſſed, again ſoftened the diſpleaſure

pleaſure of Lord Elmwood; and ſeeing and pitying his nephew's ſenſibility, he now changed his auſtere voice, and ſaid mildly, but firmly,

"I give you a week to conſult with yourſelf; at the expiration of that time I ſhall talk with you again, and I command you to be then prepared to ſpeak, not only without deceit, but without heſitation." — He left the room at theſe words, and left Ruſhbrook releaſed from a fate, which his apprehenſions had beheld impending that moment.

He had now a week to call his thoughts together, to weigh every circumſtance, and to determine whether implicitly to ſubmit to Lord Elmwood's recommendation of a wife, or to revolt from it, and ſee another, with more ſubſerviency to his will, appointed his heir.

Unde-

Undetermined how to act upon this trial which was to decide his future deſtiny, Ruſhbrook ſuffered ſo poignant an uncertainty, that he became at length ill, and before the end of the week that was allotted him for his reply, he was confined to his bed in a high fever.—Lord Elmwood was extremely affected at his indiſpoſition; he gave him every care he could beſtow, and even much of his perſonal attendance —This laſt favour had a claim upon the young man's gratitude, ſuperior to every other obligation which ſince his infancy his benefactor had conferred; and he was at times ſo moved by thoſe marks of kindneſs he received, that he would form the intention of tearing from his heart every trace that Lady Matilda had left there, and as ſoon as his health would

permit him, obey, to the utmoſt of his views, every wiſh his uncle had conceived.—Yet again, her pitiable ſituation preſented itſelf to his compaſſion, and her beauteous perſon to his love.—Divided between the claims of obligation to the father, and tender attachment to the daughter, his illneſs was increaſed by the tortures of his mind, and he once ſincerely wiſhed for that death, of which he was in danger, to free him from the dilemma in which his affections had involved him.

At the time his diſorder was at the height, and he lay complaining of the violence of his fever, Lord Elmwood, taking his hand, aſked him, "If there was any thing he could do for him?"

"Yes, yes, my Lord, a great deal:" he replied eagerly.

"What

"What is it, Harry?"

"Oh! my Lord," replied he, "that is what I muſt not tell you."

"Defer it then till you are well:" ſaid Lord Elmwood; afraid of being ſurpriſed, or affected by the ſtate of his health, into any promiſes which he might hereafter find the impropriety of granting.

"And when I recover, my Lord, you give me leave to reveal to you my wiſhes, let them be what they will?"

His uncle heſitated——but ſeeing an anxiety for the anſwer, by his raiſing himſelf upon his elbow in the bed and ſtaring wildly, Lord Elmwood at laſt ſaid, "Certainly—Yes, yes." as a child is anſwered for its quiet.

That Lord Elmwood could have no idea what the real petition was, which Ruſhbrook meant to preſent him is cer-

tain; but it is certain he expected he had ſome requeſt to make, with which it might be wrong for him to comply, and therefore he avoided hearing what it was; for great as his compaſſion for him was in his preſent ſtate, it was not of ſufficient force to urge him to give a promiſe he did not mean to perform.—Ruſhbrook, on his part was pleaſed with the aſſurance he might ſpeak when he was reſtored to health; but no ſooner was his fever abated, and his ſenſes perfectly recovered from the ſlight derangement his malady had occaſioned, than the lively remembrance of what he had hinted, alarmed him, and he was even afraid to look his kind, but awful relation in the face.—Lord Elmwood's cheerfulneſs, however, on his returning health, and his undiminiſhed attention, ſoon convinced him that he had nothing to fear.—But, alas!

he

he found too, that he had nothing to hope.—As his health re-eſtabliſhed, his wiſhes re-eſtabliſhed alſo, and with his wiſhes, his deſpair.

Convinced now, that his nephew had ſomething on his mind which he feared to reveal, the Earl no longer doubted but that ſome youthful attachment had armed him againſt any marriage he ſhould propoſe; but he had ſo much pity for his preſent weak ſtate, to delay that further inquiry which he had threatened before his illneſs, to a time when he ſhould be entirely reſtored.

It was the end of May before Ruſhbrook was able to partake in the uſual routine of the day—the country was now preſcribed him as the means of complete reſtoration; and as Lord Elmwood deſigned

deſigned to leave London ſome time in June, he adviſed him to go to Elmwood Houſe a week or two before him; — this advice was received with delight, and a letter was ſent to Mr. Sandford to prepare for Mr. Ruſhbrook's arrival.

CHAPTER XII.

DURING the illneſs of Ruſhbrook, news had been ſent of his danger, from the ſervants in town to thoſe at Elmwood Houſe, and Lady Matilda expreſſed compaſſion when ſhe was told of it — ſhe began to conceive, the inſtant ſhe thought he would ſoon die, that his viſit to her had merit rather than impertinence in its deſign, and that he might poſſibly be a more deſerving man, than ſhe had ſuppoſed him to be. Even Sandford and Miſs Woodley, began to recollect qualifications he poſſeſſed, which they never had reflected on before, and Miſs Woodley in particular, reproached herſelf that ſhe had been ſo ſevere and inattentive

tentive to him.—Notwithſtanding the proſpects his death pointed out to her, it was with infinite joy ſhe heard he was recovered; nor was Sandford leſs ſatiſfied; for he had treated the young man too unkindly not to dread, leſt any ill ſhould befall him;—but although he was glad to hear of his reſtored health, when he was informed he was coming down to Elmwood Houſe for a few weeks in the ſtyle of its maſter, Sandford, with all his religious and humane principles, could not help thinking, "That if the lad had been properly prepared to die, he had been as well out of the world as in it."

He was ſtill leſs his friend when he ſaw him arrive with his uſual florid complexion: had he come pale and ſickly, Sandford had been kind to him; but in apparently good health and ſpirits, he

could not form his lips to tell him he was "Glad to ſee him."

On his arrival, Matilda, who for five months had been at large, ſecluded herſelf as ſhe would have done upon the arrival of Lord Elmwood; but with far different ſenſations.——Notwithſtanding her reſtriction on the latter occaſion, the reſidence of her father in that houſe had been a ſource of pleaſure, rather than of ſorrow to her; but from the abode of Ruſhbrook ſhe derived puniſhment alone.

When, from inquiries, Ruſhbrook found that on his approach, Matilda had retired to her own confined apartments, the thought was torture to him; it was the hope of ſeeing and converſing with her, of being admitted at all times to her

her ſociety as the miſtreſs of the houſe, that had raiſed his ſpirits, and effected his perfect cure beyond any other cauſe; and he was hurt to the greateſt degree at this reſpect, or rather contempt, ſhown to him by her retreat.

It was, nevertheleſs, a ſubject too delicate for him to touch upon in any one ſenſe—an invitation for her company on his part, might carry the appearance of ſuperior authority, and an affected condeſcenſion, which he juſtly conſidered as the worſt of all inſults.—And yet, how could he ſupport the idea that his viſit had placed the daughter of his benefactor, as a dependent ſtranger in that houſe, where in reality *he* was the dependent, and ſhe the lawful heir.—For two or three days he ſuffered the torment of theſe reflections, hoping that he ſhould come to an

explanation of all he felt, by a fortunate meeting with Miſs Woodley; but when that meeting occurred, though he obſerved ſhe talked to him with leſs reſerve than ſhe had formerly done, and even gave ſome proofs of the native goodneſs of her diſpoſition, yet ſhe ſcrupulouſly avoided naming Lady Matilda; and when he diffidently inquired of her health, a cold reſtraint over-ſpread Miſs Woodley's face, and ſhe left him inſtantly.—To Sandford it was ſtill more difficult for him to apply; for though frequently together, they were never ſociable; and as Sandford ſeldom diſguiſed his feelings, to Ruſhbrook he was always extremely ſevere, and ſometimes unmannerly.

In this perplexed ſituation, the country air was rather of detriment than ſervice to the invalid; and had he not, like a true

a true lover, clung faſt to hope, while he could perceive nothing but deſpair, he would have returned to town, rather than by his ſtay have placed in a ſubordinate ſtate, the object of his adoration.—Perſiſting in his hopes, he one morning met Miſs Woodley in the garden, and engaging her a longer time than uſual in converſation, at laſt obtained her promiſe—"She would that day dine with him and Mr. Sandford."—But no ſooner had ſhe parted from him, than ſhe repented of her conſent; and upon communicating it, Matilda, for the firſt time in her life, darted upon her kind companion, a look of the moſt cutting reproach and haughty reſentment.——Miſs Woodley's own ſentiments had upbraided her before; but ſhe was not prepared to receive ſo pointed a mark of diſapprobation from her young friend,

till now, duteous and humble to her as to a mother, and not leſs affectionate. Her heart was too ſuſceptible to bear this diſreſpectful and contumelious frown, from the object of her long-devoted care and concern; the tears inſtantly covered her face, and ſhe laid her hands upon her heart, as if ſhe thought it would break.—Matilda was moved, but ſhe poſſeſſed too much of the manly reſentment of her father, to diſcover what ſhe felt for the firſt few minutes.—Miſs Woodley, who had given ſo many tears to her ſorrows, but never till now, one to her anger, had a deeper ſenſe of this indifference, than of the anger itſelf, and to conceal what ſhe ſuffered, left the room.—Matilda, who had been till this time working at her needle, ſeemingly compoſed, now let her work drop from her hand, and ſat for a while in a deep reverie.—

At

At length ſhe roſe up, and followed Miſs Woodley to the other apartment.—She entered grave, majeſtic and apparently ſerene, while her poor heart fluttered with a thouſand diſtreſſing ſenſations.—She approached Miſs Woodley (who was ſtill in tears) with ſilence; and awed by her manners, the faithful friend of her deceaſed mother exclaimed, "Dear Lady Matilda, think no more on what I have done—do not reſent it any longer, and on my knees I'll beg your pardon." Miſs Woodley roſe as ſhe uttered theſe laſt words; but Matilda laid faſt hold of her to prevent the poſture ſhe offered to take, and inſtantly aſſumed it herſelf. "Oh, let this be my atonement!" ſhe cried with the moſt earneſt ſupplication.

They interchanged forgiveneſs; and as this reconciliation was ſincere, they each,

each, without reſerve, gave their opinion upon the ſubject that had cauſed the miſunderſtanding; and it was agreed an apology ſhould be ſent to Mr. Ruſhbrook, "That Miſs Woodley had been ſuddenly indiſpoſed:" nor could this be ſaid to differ from the truth, for ſince what had paſſed ſhe was unfit to pay a viſit.

Ruſhbrook, who had been all the morning elated with the advance he ſuppoſed he had made in that lady's favour, was highly diſappointed, vexed, and angry, when this apology was delivered; nor did he, nor perhaps could he, conceal what he felt, although his ſevere obſerver, Mr. Sandford, was preſent.

"I am a very unfortunate man!" ſaid he, as ſoon as the ſervant was gone who brought the meſſage.

Sandford

Sandford caſt his eyes upon him with a look of ſurpriſe and contempt.

"A very unfortunate man indeed, Mr. Sandford," repeated he, "although you treat my complaint contemptuouſly."

Sandford made no reply, and ſeemed above making one.

They ſat down to dinner;—Ruſhbrook eat ſcarce any thing, but drank frequently; Sandford took no notice of either, but had a book (which was his cuſtom when he dined with perſons whoſe converſation was not intereſting to him) laid by the ſide of his plate, which he occaſionally looked into, as the diſhes were removing, or other opportunites ſerved.

Ruſhbrook, juſt now more hopeleſs than ever of forming an acquaintance with

with Lady Matilda, began to give way the ſymptoms of deſpondency; and they made their firſt attack, by urging him, to treat on the ſame level of familiarity that he himſelf was treated, Mr. Sandford, to whom he had, till now, ever behaved with the moſt profound tokens of reſpect.

"Come," ſaid he to him as ſoon as the dinner was removed, "lay aſide your book and be good company."

Sandford lifted up his eyes upon him —ſtared in his face—and caſt them on the book again.

"Pſhaw," continued Ruſhbrook, "I want a companion; and as Miſs Woodley has diſappointed me, I muſt have your company."

Sandford now laid his book down upon the table; but ſtill holding his fingers in the pages he was reading, ſaid, "And

why are you diſappointed of Miſs Woodley's company?—When people expect what they have no right to hope, 'tis impertinent aſſurance to complain they are diſappointed."

"I had a right to hope ſhe would come," anſwered Ruſhbrook, "for ſhe promiſed ſhe would."

"But what right had you to aſk her?"

"The right every one has, to make his time paſs as agreeably as he can."

"But not at the expence of another."

"I believe, Mr. Sandford, it would be a heavy expence to you, to ſee me happy; I believe it would coſt you even your own happineſs."

"That is a price I have not now to give:" replied Sandford, and began reading again.

"What, you have already paid it away? No wonder that at your time of life

life it ſhould be gone.—But what do you think of my having already ſquandered mine?"

"I don't think about you;" returned Sandford, without taking his eyes from the book.

"Can you look me in the face and ſay that, Mr. Sandford?—No, you cannot—for you know you *do* think of me, and you know you hate me."——Here he drank two glaſſes of wine one after another; "And I can tell you why you hate me." continued he: "It is from a cauſe for which I often hate myſelf."

Sandford read on.

"It is on Lady Matilda's account you hate me, and uſe me thus."

Sandford put down the book haſtily, and put both his hands by his ſide.

"Yes,"

"Yes," reſumed Ruſhbrook, "you think I am wronging her."

"I think you inſult her," exclaimed Sandford, "by this rude mention of her name; and I command you at your peril to deſiſt."

"At my peril! Mr. Sandford? Do you aſſume the authority of my Lord Elmwood?"

"I do on this occaſion; and if you dare to give your tongue a freedom"——

Ruſhbrook interrupted him—"Why then I boldly ſay, (and as her friend you ought rather to applaud than reſent it) I boldly ſay, that my heart ſuffers ſo much for her ſituation, that I am regardleſs of my own.—I love her father—I loved her mother more—but I love *her* beyond either."

"Hold your licentious tongue," cried Sandford, "or quit the room."

"Licen-

"Licentious! Oh! the pure thoughts that dwell in her innocent mind, are not leſs ſenſual than mine towards her.—Do you upbraid me with my reſpect, my pity for her? They are the ſenſations which impel me to ſpeak thus undiſguiſed, even to you, my open—no, even worſe—my ſecret enemy!"

"Inſult *me* as you pleaſe, Mr. Ruſhbrook,—but beware how you mention Lord Elmwood's daughter."

"Can it be to her diſhonour that I pity her? that I would quit the houſe this moment never to return, ſo that ſhe ſupplied the place I with-hold from her."

"Go, then;" cried Sandford.

"It would be of no uſe to her, or I would.—But come, Mr. Sandford, I will dare do as much as you.—Only ſecond me, and I will entreat Lord Elmwood

wood to be reconciled—to ſee and own her."

"Your vanity would be equal to your temerity—*you* entreat?—She muſt greatly eſteem thoſe paternal favours which *your* entreaties gained her!—Do you forget, young man, how ſhort a time it is, ſince you were *entreated for?*"

"I prove that I do not, while this anxiety for Lady Matilda, ariſes, from what I feel on that account."

"Remove your anxiety, then, from her to yourſelf; for were I to let Lord Elmwood know what has now paſſed"—

"It is for your own ſake, not for mine, if you do not."

"You ſhall not dare me to it, Mr. Ruſhbrook."—And he roſe from his ſeat: "You ſhall not dare me to do you an injury.—But to avoid the temptation, I will never again come into your com-

pany, unleſs my friend, Lord Elmwood, be preſent, to protect me and his child from your inſults."

Ruſhbrook roſe in yet more warmth than Sandford. "Have you the injuſtice to ſay that I have inſulted Lady Matilda?"

"To ſpeak of her at all, is in you an inſult.—But you have done more—You have dared to viſit her—to force into her preſence and ſhock her with your offers of ſervices which ſhe ſcorns; and with your compaſſion, which ſhe is above."

"Did ſhe complain to you?"

"She or her friend did."

"I rather ſuppoſe, Mr Sandford, that you have bribed ſome of the ſervants to reveal this."

"The ſuſpicion becomes Lord Elmwood's heir."

"It

"It becomes the man, who lives in a houſe with you."

"I thank you, Mr. Ruſhbrook, for what has paſſed this day—it has taken a weight off my mind.—I thought my diſinclination to you, might perhaps ariſe from prejudice — this converſation has relieved me from thoſe fears, and— I thank you." — Saying this he calmly walked out of the room, and left Ruſhbrook to reflect on what he had been doing.

Heated with the wine he had drank (and which Sandford, engaged on his book, had not obſerved) no ſooner was he alone, than he became by degrees cool and repentant.—"What had he done?" was the firſt queſtion to himſelf — "He had offended Sandford." — The man, whom reaſon as well as prudence had

ever taught him to reſpect, and even to revere. — He had groſsly offended the firm friend of Lady Matilda, by the unreſerved and wanton uſe of her name. —All the retorts he had uttered came now to his memory; with a total forgetfulneſs of all that Sandford had ſaid to provoke them.

He once thought to follow him and beg his pardon; but the contempt with which he had been treated, more than all the anger, with-held him.

As he ſat forming plans how to retrieve the opinion, ill as it was, which Sandford formerly entertained of him, he received a letter from Lord Elmwood, kindly enquiring after his health, and ſaying that he ſhould be down early in the following week. — Never were the friendly expreſſions of his uncle half

ſo

ſo welcome to him; for they ſerved to ſooth his imagination, racked with Sandford's wrath, and his own diſpleaſure.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHEN Sandford acted deliberately, he always acted up to his duty; it was his duty to forgive Rushbrook, and he did so—but he had declared he would never "Be again in his company unless Lord Elmwood was present;"—and with all his forgiveness, he found an unforgiving gratification, in the duty, of being obliged to keep his word.

The next day Rushbrook dined alone, while Sandford gave his company to the ladies.—Rushbrook was too proud to seek to conciliate Sandford by abject concessions, but he endeavoured to meet him

him as by accident, and meant to try what, in ſuch a caſe, a ſubmiſſive apology might effect.—For two days all the ſchemes he formed on that head proved fruitleſs; he could never procure even a ſight of him.—But on the evening of the third day, taking a lonely walk, he turned the corner of a grove, and ſaw in the very path he was going, Sandford accompanied by Miſs Woodley; and, what agitated him infinitely more, Lady Matilda was with them. He knew not whether to proceed, or to quit the path and palpably ſhun them—to one, who ſeemed to put an unkind conſtruction upon all he ſaid and did, he knew that to do either, would be to do wrong.—In ſpite of the propenſity he felt to paſs ſo near to Matilda, could he have known what conduct would have been deemed the moſt reſpectful, whatever

painful denial it had coſt him; *that*, he would have adopted.—But undetermined whether to go forward, or to croſs to another path, he ſtill walked on till he came too nigh to recede: he then, with a diffidence not affected, but moſt powerfully felt, pulled off his hat; and without bowing, ſtood reſpectfully ſilent while the company paſſed.—Sandford walked on ſome paces before, and took no further notice as he went by him, than juſt touching the fore part of his hat with his finger.—Miſs Woodley curtſied as ſhe followed.—But Lady Matilda made a full ſtop, and ſaid, in the gentleſt accents, "I hope, Mr. Ruſhbrook, you are perfectly recovered."

It was the ſweeteſt muſic he had ever liſtened to; and he replied with the moſt reverential bow, "I am better a great deal, Ma'am." Then inſtantly purſued

his way as if he did not dare to utter another ſyllable.

Sandford ſeldom found fault with Lady Matilda; not becauſe he loved her, but becauſe ſhe ſeldom did wrong—upon this occaſion, however, he was half inclined to reprimand her; but yet he did not know what to ſay—the ſubſequent humility of Ruſhbrook, had taken from the indiſcretion of her ſpeaking to him, and the event could by no means juſtify his cenſure.—On hearing her begin to ſpeak, Sandford had ſtopped; and as Ruſhbrook after replying, walked away, Sandford called to her croſsly, "Come, come along." But at the ſame time he put out his elbow for her to take hold of his arm.

She haſtened her ſteps, and did ſo—then turning to Miſs Woodley, ſhe ſaid, "I expected you would have ſpoken

to

to Mr. Ruſhbrook; it might have prevented me."

Miſs Woodley replied, "I was at a loſs what to do;—when we met formerly, he always ſpoke firſt."

"And he ought now," cried Sandford angrily—and then added, with a ſarcaſtic ſmile, "It is certainly proper that the *ſuperior*, ſhould be the firſt who ſpeaks."

"He did not look as if he thought himſelf our ſuperior," replied Matilda.

"No," returned Sandford, "ſome people can put on what looks they pleaſe."

"Then while he looks ſo pale," replied Matilda, "and ſo dejected, I can never forbear ſpeaking to him when we meet, whatever he may think of it."

"And where he and I to meet a hundred, nay a thouſand times," returned

Sandford, "I don't think I ſhould ever ſpeak to him again."

"Bleſs me! what for, Mr. Sandford?" cried Matilda—for Sandford, who was not a man that repeated little incidents, had never mentioned the circumſtance of their quarrel.

"I have taken ſuch a reſolution,"—anſwered he, "yet I bear him no enmity."

As this ſhort reply indicated that he meant to ſay no more, no more was aſked; and the ſubject was dropped.

In the mean time, Ruſhbrook, happier than he had been for months, intoxicated with joy at that voluntary mark of civility he had received from Lady Matilda, felt his heart ſo joyous, and ſo free from every particle of malice, that he reſolved, in the humbleſt manner,

ner, to make atonement for the violation of decorum he had lately committed againſt Mr. Sandford.

Too happy, at this time, to ſuffer a mortification from any indignities he might receive, he ſent his ſervant to him into his ſtudy, as ſoon as he was returned home, to beg to know "If he might be permitted to wait upon him, with a meſſage he had to deliver from Lord Elmwood."

The ſervant returned—"Mr. Sandford deſired he would ſend the meſſage by him, or the houſe-ſteward." This was highly affronting; but Ruſhbrook was not in a humour to be offended, and he ſent again, begging he would admit him; —but the anſwer was, "He was buſy."

Thus wholly defeated in his hopes of reconciliation, his new tranſports felt an allay,

allay, and the few days that remained before Lord Elmwood came, he paſſed in ſolitary muſing, and ineffectual walks and looks towards that path in which he had met Matilda — ſhe came that way no more — indeed ſcarce quitted her apartment, in the practice of that confinement ſhe was to experience on the arrival of her father.

All her former agitations now returned.—On the day he arrived ſhe wept—all the night ſhe did not ſleep—and the name of Ruſhbrook again became hateful to her.—The Earl came in extremely good health and ſpirits, but appeared concerned to find Ruſhbrook leſs well than when he went from town.—Sandford was now under the neceſſity of being in Ruſhbrook's company, yet he would never ſpeak to him but when he

he was obliged; or look at him, but when he could not help it.—Lord Elmwood obſerved this conduct, yet he neither wondered, or was offended at it —he had perceived what little eſteem Sandford ſhowed his nephew from his firſt return; but he forgave, in Sandford's humour, a thouſand faults he would not forgive in any other; nor did he deem this one of his greateſt faults, knowing the demand upon his partiality from another object.

Miſs Woodley waited on Lord Elmwood as formerly; dined with him, and related, as heretofore, to the attentive Matilda, all that paſſed.

About this time Lord Margrave, deprived by the ſeaſon of all the ſports of the field, felt his love for Matilda (which had

had been violent, even though divided with the love of hunting) now too ſtrong to be ſubdued; and he reſolved, though reluctantly, to apply to her father for his conſent to their union; — but writing to Sandford this reſolution, he was once more repulſed, and charged as a man of honour, to forbear to diſturb the tranquillity of the family by any application of the kind.—To this, Sandford received no anſwer; for the peer, highly incenſed at his miſtreſs's repugnance to him, determined more firmly than ever to conſult his own happineſs alone; and as that depended merely upon his obtaining her, he cared not by what method it was effected.

About a fortnight after Lord Elmwood came into the country, as he was riding one morning, his horſe fell with him, and

and cruſhed his leg in ſo unfortunate a manner, as to be at firſt pronounced of dangerous conſequence. — He was brought home in a poſt chaiſe, and Matilda heard of the accident with more grief than would, perhaps, on ſuch an occaſion, appertain to the moſt fondled child.

In conſequence of the pain he ſuffered, his fever was one night very high; and Sandford, who ſeldom quitted his apartment, went frequently to his bedſide, every time with the ſecret hope he ſhould hear him aſk to ſee his daughter—he was every time diſappointed—yet he ſaw him ſhake, with a cordial friendſhip, the hand of Ruſhbrook, as if he delighted in ſeeing thoſe he loved.

The danger in which Lord Elmwood was ſuppoſed to be, was but of ſhort duration, and his ſudden recovery ſucceeded. —Matilda, who had wept, moaned, and watched

watched during the criſis of his illneſs, when ſhe heard he was amending, exclaimed, (with a kind of ſurpriſe at the novelty of the ſenſation) "And this is joy that I feel!—Oh! I never till now knew, what thoſe perſons felt who experienced joy."

Nor did ſhe repine, like Mr. Sandford and Miſs Woodley, at her father's inattention to her during his malady, for ſhe did not hope like them—ſhe did not hope he would behold her, even in dying.

But notwithſtanding his ſeeming indifference, while his indiſpoſition continued, no ſooner was he recovered ſo as to receive the congratulations of his friends, than there was no one perſon he evidently ſhowed ſo much ſatisfaction at ſeeing, as Miſs Woodley.—She waited upon him timorouſly, and

with more than ordinary diſtaſte at his late conduct, when he put out his hand with the utmoſt warmth to receive her; drew her to him; ſaluted her, (an honour he had never in his life conferred before) with ſigns of the ſincereſt friendſhip and affection. — Sandford was preſent; and ever aſſociating the idea of Matilda with Miſs Woodley, felt his heart bound with a triumph it had not enjoyed for many a day.

Matilda liſtened with delight to the recital Miſs Woodley gave on her return, and many times while it laſted exclaimed, "She was happy." But poor Matilda's ſudden tranſports of joy, which ſhe termed happineſs, were not made for long continuance; and if ſhe ever found cauſe for gladneſs, ſhe far oftener had motives for grief.

As

As Mr. Sandford was ſitting with her and Miſs Woodley, one evening about a week after, a perſon rang at the bell and inquired for him: on being told of it by the ſervant, he went to the door of the apartment, and cried, "Oh! is it you? Come in."—An elderly man entered, who had been for many years the head gardener at Elmwood Houſe; a man of honeſty and ſobriety, and with an indigent family of aged parents, children, and other relations, who ſubſiſted wholly on the income ariſing from his place.—The ladies, as well as Sandford, knew him well, and they all, almoſt at once, aſked, "What was the matter?" for his looks told them ſomething diſtreſsful had befallen him.

"Oh, Sir!" ſaid he to Sandford, "I come to intreat your intereſt."

"In what, Edwards?" ſaid Sandford with a mild voice; for when his aſſiſtance was ſupplicated in diſtreſs, his rough tones always took a plaintive key.

"My Lord has diſcharged me from his ſervice?"—(returned Edwards trembling, and the tears ſtarting in his eyes) "I am undone, Mr. Sandford, unleſs you plead for me."

"I will," ſaid Sandford, "I will."

"And yet I am almoſt afraid of your ſucceſs," replied the man, "for my Lord has ordered me out of his houſe this moment; and though I knelt down to him to be heard, he had no pity."

Matilda ſighed from the bottom of her heart, and yet ſhe envied this poor man, who had been kneeling to her father.

"What was your offence?" cried Sandford.

The

The man hesitated; then looking at Matilda, said, "I'll tell you, Sir, some other time."

"Did you name me, before Lord Elmwood?" cried she eagerly, and terrified.

"No, Madam," replied he, "but I unthinkingly spoke of my poor Lady who is dead and gone."

Matilda burst into tears.

"How came you to do so mad a thing?" cried Sandford; and the encouragement which his looks had once given him, now fled from his face.

"It was unthinkingly," repeated Edwards; "I was showing my Lord some plans for the new walks, and told him, among other things, that her Ladyship had many years ago approved of them." —'Who?' cried he.—Still I did not call to mind, but said, 'Lady Elm-

wood, Sir, while you were abroad'—As ſoon as theſe words were delivered, I ſaw my doom in his looks, and he commanded me to quit his houſe and ſervice that inſtant."

"I am afraid," ſaid Sandford, ſhaking his head, "I can do nothing for you."

"Yes, Sir, you know you have more power over my Lord than any body—and perhaps you may be able to ſave me and all mine from miſery."

"I would, if I could," replied Sandford quickly.

"You can but try, Sir."

Matilda was all this while bathed in tears; nor was Miſs Woodley much leſs affected — Lady Elmwood was before their eyes—Matilda beheld her in her dying moments; Miſs Woodley ſaw her as the gay ward of Dorriforth.

"Aſk

"Aſk Mr. Ruſhbrook," ſaid Sandford, "prevail on him to ſpeak for you; he has more power than I have."

"He has not enough, then," replied Edwards, "for he was in the room with my Lord when what I have told you happened."

"And did he ſay nothing?" aſked Sandford.

"Yes, Sir; he offered to ſpeak in my behalf, but my Lord interrupted him, and ordered him out of the room—he inſtantly went."

Sandford, now obſerving the effect which this narration had on the two ladies, led the man to his own apartments, and there aſſured him he dared not undertake his cauſe; but that if time or chance ſhould happily make an alteration in his Lord's diſpoſition, he would

be the firſt who would endeavour to replace him—Edwards was obliged to ſubmit; and before the next day at noon, his pleaſant houſe by the ſide of the park, his garden, and his orchard, which he had occupied above twenty years, were cleared of their old inhabitant, and all his wretched family.

CHAPTER XIV.

THIS melancholy incident, perhaps affected Matilda and all the friends of the deceaſed Lady Elmwood, beyond any other that had occurred ſince her death.—A few days after this circumſtance, Miſs Woodley, in order to divert the diſconſolate mind of Lady Matilda, (and in the hope of bringing her ſome little anecdotes, to conſole her for that which had given her ſo much pain) waited upon Lord Elmwood in his library, and borrowed ſome books out of it.—He was now perfectly well from his fall, and received her with his uſual politeneſs, but, of courſe, not with that

pecu-

peculiar warmth which he had diſcovered when he received her juſt after his illneſs.—Ruſhbrook was in the library at the ſame time; he ſhewed her ſeveral beautiful prints which Lord Elmwood had juſt received from London, and appeared anxious to entertain and give tokens of his eſteem and reſpect for her.—But what gave her pleaſure beyond any other attention, was, that after ſhe had taken (by the aid of Ruſhbrook) about a dozen volumes from different ſhelves, and had laid them together, ſaying ſhe would ſend her ſervant to fetch them; Lord Elmwood went eagerly to the place where they were, and taking up each book, examined minutely what it was.—One author he complained was too light, another too depreſſing, and put them on the ſhelves again;

again: another was erroneous, and he changed it for a better: thus, he warned her againſt ſome, and ſelected other authors, as the moſt cautious preceptor culls for his pupil, or a fond father for his darling Child.—She thanked him for his attention to her, but her heart thanked him for his attention to his daughter.—For as ſhe had herſelf never received ſuch a proof of his care ſince all their long acquaintance, ſhe reaſonably ſuppoſed, Matidla's reading, and not hers, was the object of his ſolicitude.

Having in theſe books ſtore of comfort for poor Matilda, ſhe eagerly returned with them; and in reciting every particular circumſtance, made her conſider the volumes, almoſt like preſents from her father.

The

The month of September was now arrived; and Lord Elmwood, accompanied by Ruſhbrook, went to a ſmall ſhooting ſeat, near twenty miles diſtant from Elmwood Caſtle, for a week's particular ſport.—Matilda was once more at large; and one beautiful morning, about eleven o'clock, ſeeing Miſs Woodley walking on the lawn before the houſe, ſhe haſtily took her hat to join her; and not waiting to put it on, went nimbly down the great ſtaircaſe, with it hanging on her arm.—When ſhe had deſcended a few ſtairs, ſhe heard a footſtep walking ſlowly up; and, (from what emotion ſhe could not tell,) ſhe ſtopped ſhort, half reſolved to return back.—She heſitated a ſingle inſtant whether ſhe ſhould or not—then went a few ſteps further till ſhe came to the ſecond landing place;

place; when, by the ſudden winding of the ſtaircaſe,—Lord Elmwood was immediately before her!

She had felt ſomething like affright before ſhe ſaw him;—but her reaſon told her ſhe had nothing to fear, as he was away.—But now, the appearance of a ſtranger whom ſhe had never before ſeen; the authority in his looks, as well as in the ſound of his ſteps; a reſemblance to the portrait ſhe had been ſhown of him; a ſtart of aſtoniſhment which he gave on beholding her; but above all—her *fears* confirmed her that it was him. — She gave a ſcream of terror — put out her trembling hands to catch the baluſtrades for ſupport—miſſed them—and fell motionleſs into her father's arms.

He

He caught her, as by the ſame impulſe, he would have caught any other perſon falling for want of aid. — Yet when he found her in his arms, he ſtill held her there—gazed on her attentively —and once preſſed her to his boſom.

At length trying to eſcape the ſnare into which he had been led, he was going to leave her on the ſpot where ſhe fell, when her eyes opened and ſhe uttered, "Save me." — Her voice unmanned him. — His long-reſtrained tears now burſt forth—and ſeeing her relapſing into the ſwoon, he cried out eagerly to recall her.—Her name did not, however, come to his recollection—nor any name but this — "Miſs Milner—Dear Miſs Milner."

That ſound did not awaken her; and now

now again he wiſhed to leave her in this ſenſeleſs ſtate, that not remembering what had paſſed, ſhe might eſcape the puniſhment.

But at this inſtant, Giffard, with another ſervant, paſſed by the foot of the ſtairs: on which, Lord Elmwood called to them — and into Giffard's hands delivered his apparently dead child; without one command reſpecting her, or one word of any kind; while his face was agitated with ſhame, with pity, with anger, with paternal tenderneſs.

As Giffard ſtood trembling, while he relieved his Lord from this hapleſs burthen; her father had to unlooſe her hand from the ſide of his coat, which ſhe had caught faſt hold of as ſhe fell,

and graſped ſo cloſely, it was with difficulty releaſed—On attempting to take the hand away he trembled—faltered—then bade Giffard do it.

"Who, I, my Lord! I ſeparate you!" cried he.—But recollecting himſelf, "My Lord, I will obey your commands whatever they are." And ſeizing her hand, pulled it with violence—it fell—and her father went away.

Matilda was carried to her own apartments, laid upon the bed, and Miſs Woodley haſted to attend her, after liſtening to the recital of what had paſſed.

When Lady Elmwood's old and affectionate friend entered the room, and ſaw her youthful charge lying pale and

ſpeechleſs, yet no father by to comfort or ſooth her, ſhe lifted up her hands to Heaven exclaiming, with a burſt of tears, "And is this the end of thee, my poor child?—Is this the end of all our hopes?—of thy own fearful hopes—and of thy mother's ſupplications!—Oh! Lord Elmwood! Lord Elmwood!"

"At that name Matilda ſtarted, and cried, "Where is he?—Is it a dream, or have I ſeen him?"

"It is all a dream, my dear." ſaid Miſs Woodley.

"And yet I thought he held me in his arms," ſhe replied—"I thought I felt his hands preſs mine—Let me ſleep and dream again."

Now thinking it beſt to undeceive

her, "It is no dream, my dear," returned Miſs Woodley.

"Is it not?" cried ſhe, ſtarting up and leaning on her elbow—"Then I ſuppoſe I muſt go away—go for ever away."——

Sandford now entered.—Having been told the news, he came to condole—but at the ſight of him Matilda was terrified, and cried, "Do not reproach me, do not upbraid me—I know I have done wrong—I know I had but one command from my father, and that I have diſobeyed."

Sandford could not reproach her, for he could not ſpeak;—he therefore only walked to the window and concealed his tears.

That

That whole day and night was paſſed in ſympathetic grief, in alarm at every ſound, leſt it ſhould be a meſſenger to pronounce Matilda's deſtiny.

Lord Elmwood did not ſtay upon this viſit above three hours at Elmwood Houſe; he then ſet off again for the ſeat he had left; where Ruſhbrook ſtill remained, and from whence his Lordſhip had merely come by accident, to look over ſome writings which he wanted diſpatched to town.

During his ſhort continuance here, Sandford cautiouſly avoided his preſence; for he thought, in a caſe like this, what nature would not of herſelf effect, no art, no arguments of his, could accompliſh: to Nature and Providence he left the whole.—What theſe two powerful prin-

ciples brought about, the reader will judge, when he peruſes the following letter, received early the next morning by Miſs Woodley.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.